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A/N and Allegiances

Hi guys, Silverstorm here! So I did this book already with wolves as the main characters, so make sure you check that out ^^ but this is about cats! I hope you guys enjoy! Give as many votes as you want ;D

Leader: Waterstar - tannish ginger she cat with white paws and blue eyes

Deputy: Ashfeather -grey tabby she cat with yellow-green eyes

Medicine Cats:

Goldenstripe- ginger she-cat with brown eyes

Willownose- black she cat with green eyes

Warriors:

Blossomfur- white, black, and ginger calico she cat with blue eyes

Dawnstripe - light grey/white she-cat with yellow eyes

Pandaleaf- white and black she cat with amber eyes

Firesong- fiery red tom with green eyes

Woodshadow- brown tom with black blue eyes

Jayfoot- grey tom with blue eyes

Whitestorm- white and black tom with grey eyes

Bluetail-silvery gray she-cat with blue eyes

Lemonheart- ginger tom with yellow eyes

Breezefang-black tom with amber eyes and white splotches on his chest

Sandwhisker-sandy tom with green eyes

Rabbitclaw-white tom with grey-blue eyes

Hawkfeather-grey tom with green eyes

Lilyheart- calico she cat with amber eyes

Leafshadow-grey/black she cat with white paws and underbelly and dark eyes

Honeystripe-ginger she cat with green eyes and

Cloudpelt-white tom with blue eyes

Mousetail-grey she cat with green eyes

Thrushtail-brown tom with amber eyes and

Skybright- blue grey she-cat with grey eyes

Brightclaw-white and grey tom with dark eyes

Lightthunder-calico she cat with one black paw and different colored eyes

Bearthorn- brown tabby tom with yellow eyes

Tigertooth- dark brown tabby with amber eyes

Featherbreeze- light grey she cat with light brown eyes

Treestorm- brown tom with yellow eyes

Eartheart-dark grey she cat with green eyes and very long claws

Birchclaw- brown tom with white splotches

Snowbreeze- white she cat with a black splotch on her chest and blue eyes

Brackenfur- grey-brown tom with amber eyes

Cloudbranch- white tom with green eyes

Amberleaf- ginger she-cat with amber eyes

Feathershine- fluffy grey she-cat with black paws

Ravenheart- all black tom with hazel eyes

Pebbleshine- grey she-cat with white markings and hazel eyes

Mudclaw- dirty brown tom with amber eyes

Petalfur- white she cat with green eyes and

Shadowfoot- dark black tom with black eyes

Apprentices:

Riverpaw- handsome blue-grey tom with blue eyes

Lightningpaw- ginger tom with green eyes and white splotches

Moonpaw- pretty white and black she cat with amber eyes

Smallpaw- small grey she-cat with hazel eyes

Kits:

Pinekit- brown kit with green eyes

Jaykit- grey-brown kit with blue eyes

Elders:

Windstorm-white grey tom with amber eyes

Lion- yellow tom with amber eyes

Maplecloud- brown-white tabby with milky white eyes, blind

edit: thank you guys so much for 190+ views!

Chapter 1- The Dream

Ashfeather was dreaming. She was in a forest where the sky was glittering and the trees were taller than the world. A cat appeared in front of her.

"Hello, Ashstar," it said, its silver fur gleaming.

Ashfeather crouched down either in respect, fear, or anger, she didn't know. But curiosity overcame her. "Who are you?" she asked.

"My name is Starshine. I am the mother of your mother. I have come to tell you that part of your destiny has been completed, by killing your sister. More is yet to come."

The silver she-cat dipped her head and melted back into the shadows.

Ashfeather jerked out of sleep, thrashing her legs wildly. It took her a second, but finally she relaxed and began to groom her pelt as the first rays of dawn spilled into the gorge, where SilverClan lived. The other warriors began to stir, shaking sleep from their eyes. Ashfeather left the den, ears pricked and tail high. She was glad that the snow had gone, but it was still cold and prey was scarce. Then her absurd dream floated into her head. Her kin's ominous parting words rose. More is yet to come. Ashfeather didn't give it much thought, but patiently waited for the rest of her clanmates to come out.

She watched across the clearing as Smallkit, one of her sister's kits, poked her muzzle out of the den, sniffed the air, then came back in. Acornpaw, Ashfeather's own apprentice, came tumbling out of a den, Nutpaw and Streampaw following close behind. Warriors started emerging from their dens. Whitestorm and Jayfoot came up to her with friendly twitches of their tails, Lilyheart, Leafshadow, and Thrushtail walked across the clearing with their apprentices bouncing around them. More cats came out, and making sure that everyone was there, Ashfeather began dividing up patrols.

"...Bearthorn, take out another hunting party, and Mousetail, you can lead a border patrol to see if the fox has gone," she finished with a sweep of her tail, and looked around for her apprentice and fellow mentors.

Snowbreeze padded up to her with Brackenfur at her heels.

"Ready to go?" she asked her sister.

Ashfeather motioned for the apprentices to come over. "Yes," she mewed.

Ashfeather then laid her tail on her apprentice's shoulders, who had bounded up to her. "C'mon!"

Rabbitclaw waved to them. "Have fun," their father teased.

Together the cats bounded out of the gorge and into the hunting clearing.

Snowbreeze ruffled her fur, and looked at Nutpaw. "Nutpaw, you have to catch three pieces of prey," she told him. "But that also goes for the rest of you," she added on afterthought.

"We will be watching," chimed in Brackenfur. Ashfeather flicked his ear playfully.

"We will come back to camp once we're done," she mewed.

The three apprentices nodded and padded off into the bush. Ashfeather nodded to her littermates and turned with difficulty in the crowded space, after Acornpaw. Ashfeather found a spot to sit and watch as Acornpaw sniffed the air. A moment later, she crept off after her prey. Ashfeather followed her around the forest, noting how she crept up on mice, how she pounced, and how she masked her scent. After Acornpaw caught her third piece of prey, Ashfeather pushed out of the bramble thicket and praised her apprentice.

"Great job! Let me help you get all this back to camp."

Together they dragged two squirrels and a mouse back to camp.

When they got into the gorge, Ashfeather praised her apprentice once more and allowed her to go and get some food and rest.

Waterstar stopped Ashfeather. "me, you, and Goldenstripe will go to out border tomorrow, okay? be ready for it."

Ashfeather looked back at her, confused. "But why-" she started. Waterstar silenced her with a look and leaped up on her boulder. Ashfeather immediately came to the foot of it, for she was the deputy and had to be present there. Waterstar nodded to Ashfeather and opened her mouth.

"I must congratulate the apprentices for passing their fourth assessment," she said. "Tomorrow, you will have your final one, and if all goes well, they will become warriors."

Ashfeather cheered along with the rest of the Clan, gazing warmly at Acornpaw and her brothers. They had ducked their heads, but now were sitting proudly. Waterstar let them cheer for a couple more seconds, then silenced her Clan.

"One more thing. Two separate Clans have shown up around our territory." Waterstar said hesitantly. "They operate like us and their leaders spoke to me earlier. They said we would live in harmony, but we would fight if something happened." she sighed, and then her gaze became firm. "I promised that we would not trespass, or steal prey from another Clan's territory. Is that clear?"

Sullenly the Clan nodded. Rabbitclaw raised his tail.

"What are the Clan's names?" he asked.

Waterstar answered his question with a twitch of her ears. "The one to our east border are called MarbleClan. The other one, to the north, are GoldenClan."

Ashfeather flicked her tail uneasily. "What if they turn on us like RowanClan and ShadowClan?" she voiced her fears out loud.

Waterstar shook her head wearily. "We are honorable, and we must trust that they will be too." she said.

Ashfeather nodded. It made sense. She raised her tail to quiet the Clan.

"Go get some food, and rest. Goldenstripe, Ashfeather and I will meet with the others tomorrow." she flicked her tail again and turned to the fresh-kill pile. Snowbreeze joined her, tail twitching nervously, and settled down beside her as they shared a squirrel.

"What - do you think - about - the new - Clans?" asked Snowbreeze between bites.

Ashfeather shrugged. "I'm sure they can't be that bad, but we still have to be on alert."

Then she looked up as her mate, Bearthorn, padded over.

"Hi," he mewed, laying down on Ashfeather's other side.

"Hello," she greeted him, curling up next to him as she finished her food. "Snowbreeze and I were talking about the new Clans."

Bearthorn nodded, looking worried. "We can't have more Clans turn on us, can we?"

Snowbreeze shook her head. "I sure hope not."

Rabbitclaw padded over. "We'd better get some sleep. It's going to be a full day tomorrow."

Ashfeather sighed. The four of them carried their leftovers to the leftover pile, and trooped into the warriors' den. Bearthorn lay down and stuck his muzzle into Ashfeather's nest. Ashfeather bade Snowbreeze good night and curled up beside him, falling asleep to the steady sound of his breathing.

Chapter 2 - Wait, WHAT?

I had a fun time writing this chapter, because Waterstar is *feisty!* Hope you enjoy!

The next day, after Ashfeather assigned patrols, she stopped her father from coming back into the den.

"Rabbitclaw, I specifically took you off patrols today, because Waterdapple and I have to go meet the other Clans. Can you train Acornpaw today? She is having her last assessment," she said, shooing away some kits that were running under their paws.

Rabbitclaw nodded, looking pleased. "Will do, Ashfeather."

"Thanks!" Ashfeather mewed gratefully.

Then she bounded up to her leader. Waterstar and Goldenstripe were standing by the cliff path, waiting for her. Together the she-cats bounded out of the camp. When they reached the corner of the territory, Waterstar paced up and down their border, gazing anxiously around. Ashfeather sat down, sniffing the air every couple of seconds calmly. Soon she could smell odd scents, and she could hear the sound of paws padding through the undergrowth. Three cats appeared from the left. The smaller one acknowledged Waterstar with a nod, but sat down and stared off toward MarbleClan's territory. Waterstar flexed her claws, unsure of what to say, and sat down, tail twitching. A couple of heartbeats later, more cats dropped from the branches and sat down.

"Hello." Waterstar sounded tense.

The muscular cat from GoldenClan muttered a greeting. The she-cat from MarbleClan waved her tail breezily.

Waterstar relaxed a little beside Ashfeather and began to speak. "I am the leader of SilverClan. My name is Waterstar, and this is my deputy, Ashfeather. This is my medicine cat, Goldenstripe."

Ashfeather dipped her head. "It's a pleasure to meet you all."

The she-cat stepped forward. "My name is Sunstar, and this is my deputy, Cloudwhisper, and my medicine cat, Berrynose."

The cats next to her gave nods.

The leader of GoldenClan got to his paws. "I am Rootstar. My deputy, Breezewing. My medicine cat, Bellaleaf."

The other cat gave a twitch of his ears and stared ahead. The medicine cat just flicked her tail.

Sunstar looked at Rootstar and nodded.

"Our Clans have worked together for a very long time. No other Clan worked like us. But now we found you!" then her expression softened. "We will tell you our code and how to follow it."

Waterstar let out a small hiss of annoyance. "We have our own code, and we can follow it probably better than you can."

Rootstar shook his head. "It's about living with another Clan." he said patiently, but Ashfeather could tell he was annoyed by her tone.

Waterstar flexed her claws sullenly. "Fine."

Rootstar flicked his tail and drew an imaginary circle in the air with his nose. Green light lit up the air for a second, and then a piece of paper fluttered down to the ground.

"Here is the code," said Rootstar, pawing it over to Waterstar.

Ashfeather's mouth fell open. "Y-you can do m-magic?!" she stammered, still looking at the paper.

Rootstar looked pleased. "Both of us can."

Ashfeather looked at Sunstar for confirmation. Sunstar pawed at the air and it shimmered blue, and a small wisp of cloud floated down from the sky.

Ashfeather blinked. "Wow!"

Sunstar poked it with her nose and it disappeared. Ashfeather focused her attention on the paper that Rootstar had conjured. It looked like this:

Code of the Clans

Do not trespass on another Clan territory.

Do not steal prey from another Clan.

Ask for permission if you need to cross enemy territory.

Medicine cats are allowed to go on other territory to look for herbs.

Cats are not allowed to mate with cats from other Clan.

You can have friends in other Clans, but put your Clan first.

During a battle, if someone calls a retreat, stop fighting.

All Clans will meet in the clearing at every new moon.

When Ashfeather finished reading, she looked up at her leader.

"It sounds reasonable," she said.

Waterstar narrowed her eyes as she finished. "It seems fishy," she huffed. "Meeting at the full moon? To fight?"

Goldenstripe touched her tail tip to her leader's shoulder warningly. "We all agree to your terms," she said.

Rootstar narrowed his eyes at Waterstar.

"Since you agree, I think if you share with StarClan, they will give you your abilities too."

Waterstar perked up. Her ears pricked up, her eyes grew bright, and she stared at Rootstar in fascination.

"Really?"

Sunstar nodded, amused.

Waterstar flicked one ear. "Okay then."

But Ashfeather could tell she wanted to do magic too. She just didn't trust these leaders. Then Waterstar nudged her and Goldenstripe.

"Go and get to know the others. We're leaving soon," she said briskly.

Ashfeather held in a laugh and came over to where Cloudwhisper and Breezewing were sitting.

"Hello, she said shyly.

Cloudwhisper twitched her tail.

"Hello, Ashfeather," she said in a milky voice.

Breezewhing dipped his head. "Have you been a deputy for long?" he said, making easy conversation.

Ashfeather sat down. "A couple of seasons."

"Same here," Breezewing said eagerly. "How did you get the post?"

Ashfeather sighed. "My sister killed the other deputy, and I avenged his death."

Cloudwhisper's mouth fell open. "Why did you kill your sister!?" she demanded.

"There was a prophecy," Ashfeather huffed. "I was destined to do that."

Breezewing's eyes shone with admiration. "Wow!" he gasped. "I only got the post because I drove a couple of badgers off the territory."

he tipped his head to one side. "And because I was the only suitable choice."

Ashfeather laughed. "Do any of you have littermates? Or mates? Or kits?" she asked, changing the subject to a more reasonable topic.

Breezewing stretched his paws. "I have a mate. Her name is Pebblefur. We have two kits, Gorgepaw and Stonepaw. I also have a sister named Shardclaw."

Ashfeather wagged her tail. "Great!" she exclaimed. "I have a mate, and his name is Bearthorn. I have a bunch of littermates, and Bearthorn and I plan on having kits in a season or two."

Cloudwhisper puffed out her chest. "I have two sisters and one brother, Yellowleaf, Echofur and Birchclaw."

Ashfeather got to her paws as Waterdapple started to come over. "It was nice meeting you. Until the Gathering!"

The other two waved their tails as Ashfeather bounded away to catch up to Waterdapple and Goldenstripe.

"It was nice, wasn't it?" Goldenstripe asked Ashfeather. "Bellaleaf showed me a new herb!"

Ashfeather laid her tail on her friend's shoulder. "It was," she agreed.

oOoO! Waterstar wants magic powers! she'll get them....right?

-Silverstorm

Chapter 4 - SilverClan joins the League Of Magic

Ashfeather sighed.

"Waterstar, you can't go yet!" she hissed, stopping her leader yet again as she tried to come out from the gorge. "It's not even dusk yet."

Waterstar snarled at her softly. "I want magic powers!" she whined.

Ashfeather could have laughed but instead she motioned for Goldenstripe to come over. She padded across the clearing, put some herbs down, and ordered Waterstar to eat them. Growling sullenly, Waterstar licked them up and lay down. Relieved, Ashfeather crossed to the fresh-kill pile and crouched down to gulp down a rabbit before they left. Once dusk fell, Ashfeather rose and went out into the clearing. Goldenstripe joined her and Waterstar, and once again they bounded out of the gorge and turned onto the path that led to the Mooncave. Ashfeather trekked up the path and once again, dropped into the cave. She had only gone in once before she became a warrior, and now she braced herself, hurling over the edge and landing safely on the bottom. Waterstar and Goldenstripe joined her, and they lay down on the cool stone.

The dark cave dissolved and reformed into a clearing of light. A cat with light-colored fur stepped out of the light, gazing at Waterstar.

Waterstar, who had been staring around haughtily, showed emotion for the first time.

"Father?" she whispered, gazing at the tom. "Alderfoot?"

"Hello, Waterstar," Alderfoot mewed. "You need to be careful, and use your new powers only for the good and not as much," he hesitated. "But beware, if you use them too much, they will drain you. Use them only in times of need." he touched his nose to hers

and she froze. Silver light erupted around them, so Ashfeather squeezed her eyes shut, feeling the sensation of falling, down, down, down...when the light dimmed, Ashfeather opened her eyes and immediatly looked away. Thick stars danced around the tannish she-cat. Waterstar was at the height of power, eyes flashing, claws outstretched, ears pricked, and muscles tensed. As quickly as it had started, it ended, Then she drooped down, almost lifeless.

Goldenstripe stiffened next to Ashfeather.

But Waterstar did not show any more emotion. Her eyes blazed with distrust and suspicion, but she still muttered a hurried "Thank you." Alderfoot shook his head wearily. "Well, use your powers well, and you are officially a part of the League of Magic," he murmured and leaped away.

The clearing dissolved once more, and as Goldenstripe and Ashfeather got to their feet, they saw Waterstar already jumping the gap, running at top speed like a deer, silver light shining around her. Goldenstripe shook her head.

"She's sick, and she won't tell me what's happened and refuses to take herbs! I fear she will use her powers too much and drain herself." She sighed and leaped, landing with a thud. Ashfeather followed her, and together they followed their leader back to camp. They trekked across the moor, and Ashfeather fought to stay awake. Once they reached the forest, Goldenstripe and Ashfeather stopped, but Waterstar kept using her powers, running faster than a regular cat. Wearily the two cats followed, and collapsed into their dens as soon as they reached the camp.

** the next day **

"No, no, don't do that," Waterstar mewed to Ashfeather absentmindedly as she tried to gather a hunting patrol. Ashfeather stopped looking for cats to hunt with and looked up.

"What now? "she snarled, trying to be polite with her leader but failing miserably.

Waterstar waved her tail. "I have magic, remember?" she sang,

summoning a magic cloud just to lift her up into the air and back down. "We don't need to hunt. I can just summon food."

She flicked her ears and a silver rabbit flew from the trees and flopped down at her paws.

"Here, try it!" Waterstar encouraged, pushing it forwards her deputy.

Ashfeather groaned. This again! "We have to stock up on actual food, not magical food. You're draining yourself!"

Waterstar dismissed her with a flick of her tail. "It's for the Clan!" she reminded her. "And if youre going to be rude to your Clan leader, then you might as well go onto tick duty for the elders!"

Ashfeather couldn't help but contradict that. "We have apprentices for a reason, Waterstar. Please, don't put me on tick duty, I'm your deputy, for StarClan's sake!"

She looked down at the silver rabbit laying at her paws and reluctantly bit down into it. It tasted disgusting, but maybe Waterstar didn't know that.

Ashfeather spat it out and turned back to the waiting cats. Then an idea came to her.

"Waterstar, why don't you go mark the borders? You need to keep your strength up," she said with sympathy.

Waterstar shot her a suspicious look but shrugged and vanished in a puff of sparkles. Ashfeather sighed and then summoned that Clan to a meeting.

"How many of you don't want to have magical prey? How many of you want to hunt and eat what you catch?"

Nearly all the cats raised their tails. Encouraged, Ashfeather kept going.

"I have an idea to make sure all of us can get our fill. Here's the Plan....."

Later in the day, Ashfeather came to the rock to find the rest of the Clan waiting for her. Confused, Ashfeather started saying something.

"You carried out the plan, right? Now-"

Bluetail interrupted her. "We get how you feel, Ashfeather. And we don't want Waterstar as our leader anymore. We want a leader that respects magic but puts effort into the daily activities. And that leader is you, Ashfeather."

Ashfeather was taken aback. "B-but I-"

Whitestorm flexed his claws. "Waterstar is going to come back very soon." he interrupted with a apologetic glance at Ashfeather. "I say we have two warriors on each side of the entrance to tackle her when she comes in. We'll keep her in the prisoners' den, and two warriors will guard her. We don't want any more Darkfur strategies."

They had rehearsed this conversation, Ashfeather realized as he explained it.

She nodded, even though some cats frowned and called, "No, kill her!"

"What do you want us to do?" Breezeclaw called.

"Breezeclaw, you and Leafshadow can tackle Waterstar from the left, and you will be the ones to guard her. Lightthunder and Bearthorn, take the right," she mewed, hating herself for what she was doing, not sure if it was the right thing.

The four warriors nodded and went to their places. Ashfeather glanced at the rest of the Clan. "Split into two groups, one will stay in the nursery, and one in the warriors' den," she ordered. Then she glanced at the sun. It was almost hidden beneath the tree. "Go, go, go!"

Ashfeather crouched in the shadows as she waited for Waterstar to come back. A pang shook her body. How could her former deputy and mentor turn her back on the code!? Rustling jolted her out of

her thoughts. A light pelt appeared in the entrance in a puff of silver. For a moment Waterstar stared around the apparently empty camp, and then one by one, the four cats leaped on top of her. The Clan emerged from the den and made a semi-circle around them, making a space where they could take Waterstar into the prisoners' den. The dust cleared, and Waterstar was being dragged into the den, sending silver sparkles at her attackers. They flinched as the sparks hit them and Lightthunder let go as two more touches her pelt, shaking them off. Whitestorm took her spot as Waterstar struggled against their grip. Finally, the thrashing cats threw Waterstar in the den and Leafshadow and Breezeclaw took their places as Ashfeather emerged from the shadows. Shaking her head, she and Bearthorn ducked into the den and sat down beside the light colored cat. They waited for her to catch her breath, and Waterstar sat, shoulders hunched.

Bearthorn was flexing his claws angrily, and Ashfeather shot him a warning look and resumed her patient stare at the tan leader.

"Why?" Waterstar croaked once she could speak.

Ashfeather caught her gaze and shot the question back.

"Why?" she asked.

Waterstar's gaze hardened. "I am getting old, Ashfeather," she sighed. "The rest of the Clan followed me only because I was Silverfang's successor-" Ashfeather's heart gave a jerk when her mother's name was spoken. "-they did not want me as they wanted you."

Ashfeather interrupted. "That's not true! The Clan d-"

Waterstar shook her head. "Ask Bearthorn. I know the truth."

Ashfeather looked at Bearthorn, who glanced at his paws and didn't meet her eyes. Anger bubbled up inside her, at her mate, at her Clan, but how could her sweet, kind mentor turn into this!

"How could you keep this from me?" Ashfeather demanded. He didn't answer. Ashfeather turned back to Waterstar, seething.

"Was that why you spent so much time in your den? Because no one wanted to patrol with you?"

"Yes," Waterstar turned away.

Ashfeather sighed. "Well, I suppose I am the leader of SilverClan now." she said wearily. "You got too obsessed with magic to be a leader. I don't really know what to do, so just stay here...I guess.."

Waterstar hung her head. "I understand. And I apologize. Alas, I am too old to change my nature, and make my Clan see what I see. You will be a great leader, Ashfeather. I believe in you."

Ashfeather felt warmed by her former mentor's words. "Thank you, Waterstar. You taught me a lot. I'll take you to the StarCave to get your powers removed, and I'll get mine. You can move to the elder's den, and you can have a great ending to your life."

"Yes. I suppose that's my destiny." Waterstar muttered.

Ashfeather turned, and with an icy glare at Bearthorn, led the way out of the den. Bearthorn followed and tried to make conversation.

"Ashfeather, I'm really sorry-" he mewed desperately, his brown fur bristling against the wind.

Ashfeather flicked her tail and moved away. "Save it."

"I'm sorry!" he apologized. "I only kept it from you-"

Ashfeather walked off. Bearthorn sighed, and ran in front of her and gazed into her eyes. Annoyed as she was, Ashfeather was captivated by those soft, milky brown eyes as usual, and she let him talk.

Bearthorn looked at her. "I only kept it from you because I knew Waterstar was your mentor, and you grew up thinking she was amazing, and you would be mad if-"

"That's right. I am." Ashfeather broke eye contact with him and spun around, tail thrashing. She heard Bearthorn blow out a breath. And then he said something that made her freeze.

"Look, Ashfeather, this is what I love about you. You protect your loved ones with as much as you can give. And I don't want to lose you." his voice started to break. "I'm really sorry, and I promise I won't keep anything from you again. I love you."

Ashfeather turned around and walked straight to her mate. This is what she had wanted to hear from him.

"I forgive you," she murmured. "And I love you too."

They gazed at each other, then Bearthorn dipped his head.

"So, about having kits," he teased.

But Ashfeather was ready. "I'm ready. I want to start a family as much as you."

A/N

OoOoOoOoOoO Bearthorn has his girl convinced xD kits in the next chapter!

pls comment any suggestions in the comments!

-Silver

Chapter 5 - The Leader's Kits

Ashstar woke from gripping pains in her belly. Her leg automatically kicked out and she pulled the kick in, before she realized she couldn't kick anyone anymore, she was in the leader's den under the gorge cave. Again a ripple passed through her belly and she struggled to contain a yowl. The spasm had barely passed when another came on and nearly swept her off her feet. She stood up, tottered to the entrance, when another one came. This time she couldn't hold in a yowl and soon, the leaves rustled and Goldenstripe pushed her way in.

"What's wrong, Ashstar?"

Ashstar couldn't speak. She tried to gesture with her tail, and Goldenstripe's eyes narrowed.

"Lay down for me, please," she said briskly, and swished out of the den. Ashstar toppled over into the nest as spasm after spasm rolled over her. She lay in the nest for several painful minutes before a worried Goldenstripe came in, followed by Willownose, who was calmer. They both put down their bundles of leaves and took their positions at Ashstar's stomach. Goldenstripe murmured something to Willownose and she nodded. A churn of fear bit Ashstar. Was something wrong?

Suddenly they put their paws on her belly and pushed, as another spasm went over Ashstar. She screeched, flailing her paws. It felt like something was slithering out of her. But she couldn't twist around to see, and another wave of pain was looming and she was fighting to stay afloat!

Distinctly she heard Willownose.

"She's exhausted. This kit needs to come out now!" the young medicine cat said to the Goldenstripe, fear laced in her voice.

Hazily Ashstar saw Goldenstripe set her jaw, and then another spasm rolled over her. At the same time, Goldenstripe brought her paws down hard, and the pain stopped. But Ashstar had submerged into the deep black void that was threatening to take her over.

* * *

Everything was blurry.

"StarClan?" Ashstar whispered. "Am I dead?"

She blinked a couple of times, and the medicine den swept into focus.

Ashstar had the queer sensation that something was suckling her. Looking down, she saw a big, brown-colored kit. Looking more closely, Ashstar saw that next to it was another kit, with grey fur just the same color as her own. It blended in with hers so much she hadn't even seen it yet. She jerked her head up as Willownose came into the den.

"Hi," Ashstar croaked, her throat dry.

Willownose's eyes sparkled as she looked down at the kits. "Hello! They're beautiful," she purred, stroking the brown kit's flanks with her tail.

Then her demeanor changed. "You need water!" she ordered. "Drink up, now!" Willownose shoved some soaked moss under Ashstar's nose.

Chortling gently, Ashstar lapped at the moss. It soaked her tongue and water sped into her muscles. Then she looked down at her kits.

"Are they females or males?" she mewed, staring with adoration at the two little scraps of fur.

"They are both males," Willownose said proudly.

Then Ashstar tried to look outside. "What time is it?" she asked, craning her neck to try to see.

Willownose pushed her back into her nest. "It's dawn," she answered. "Every cat will be waking up to see two new warriors!"

Ashstar pricked her ears and shifted so as to not bother her kits.

"Can you get Bearthorn, please?"

Willownose rolled her eyes. "Okay, okay." she wriggled out of the den and disappeared.

Ashstar gently licked her kits, and curled around them as she waited. The grey one did not move much, but the brown one was wriggling around, causing a lot of noise.

Soon Bearthorn rushed into the den, followed by Willownose, who sat at the entrance and waited. Bearthorn settled down beside Ashstar and licked her ear gently.

"They are beautiful!" he murmured, gazing down at them. "Our kits will be the best in the Clan!"

Ashstar gave her kits another lick.

"They will," she agreed. "They most certainly will."

Bearthorn gave a start, and Ashstar gave him a hard stare as the kits shifted at his sudden movement.

"Sorry, sorry," he mewed, more to the kits than Ashstar. "I just realized - we need to name them!"

Ashstar laughed. "Oh, yes!"

Bearthorn studied his kits. "This one that looks like you, should probably be named for his eye color, and hopefully they'll open their eyes soon. But this one, brown like me, could be Pinekit?" he suggested hopefully.

Ashstar flicked his cheek with her tail. "That's perfect!" she agreed. She tried to hide a huge yawn with her tail, but Bearthorn did not allow it.

"You are exhausted!" he mewed sharply. "Rest, right now! I'll sleep with you for now."

They laid down together, and dozed off.

When they woke up, it was already dusk. Ashstar gave a start as she woke, and accidentally shifted Pinekit to the side, and he woke up. His eyes were open! They were a deep, deep green. Ashstar woke Bearthorn. "His eyes are green!" she whispered.

Bearthorn opened his own, and gazed delightedly at his son. "He's perfect!" he said. The mates turned to their grey kit. He was still yawning, half asleep. Then he blinked his eyes open.

Bearthorn just stared at him, mouth open. Ashstar felt her heart expand, just enough to fit these two precious bundles of fur.

The grey kit's eyes were a sky blue, the one that seems endless if one looked at it long enough.

"Well - it's decided!" laughed Bearthorn. Ashstar flicked her ears. "Are you thinking what I'm thinking!?" she mewed quietly.

"Yes! Welcome to the world and to our Clan, little Jaykit!"

Then Goldenstripe stuck her head in.

"Oh, they opened their eyes!" she said. "Did you name them yet?"

Ashstar grinned proudly. "Indeed. I'll tell you what their names are to the rest of the Clan as well."

Bearthorn heaved himself up and helped Ashstar get to her paws. Together they came out and hopped onto the rock. Blossomfur, Ashstar's deputy, came bouncing over with Dawnstripe at her paws.

"Congratulations, Ashstar!" she mewed eagerly. Bearthorn nodded to the she-cats and the four of them sat down. Ashstar didn't even have to yowl like Waterdapple did, she just waited for everyone to gather. And she didn't have to raise her tail for quiet, the Clan fell silent when she opened her mouth.

"Cats of SilverClan!" Ashstar announced. "I have had my kits! One of them is a large brown kit with green eyes. His name is Pinekit. The other is a light grey kit, smaller, and with blue eyes. His name is Jaykit. We all know they will be great warriors!"

The Clan celebrated. "Pinekit! Jaykit!"

Waterdapple stayed away from the rest of them, grey hairs visible, but still jumping up and down with a light in her blue eyes.

Ashstar felt pride blossoming in her chest as she watched her clan.

Was this how Mother felt when she called the Clan to order, while me and my littermates sat outside the nursery? If so...this is pretty cool!

The Clan quieted down, and Ashstar sprang off from the rock and into her den. Bearthorn stood at the entrance, and let one to two cats at a time meet the little kits. Snowbreeze and Amberleaf pushed their way in and crouched down beside Ashstar. Snowbreeze sniffed Pinekit.

"They are so cute!" her sister squealed. Amberleaf licked Jaykit, and his paw came swinging through the air and his claws connected with Amberleaf's nose.

"Look at that!" Amberleaf exclaimed, jerking her head back. "He's a little warrior already! You're going to miss them when they will be apprentices," she went on. "I miss mine so much!"

Amberleaf's kits had become apprentices not too long ago, and one of Ashstar's littermates got to train one. Ashstar nodded to her sisters and motioned for them to leave. Bearthorn let two more cats at a time come in, until the whole Clan had met the kits. Once everyone was done, Bearthorn and Ashtstar curled up and slept, not bothering to hide their yawns again.

I love bringing in new life to the Clan! New warriors! *Throws dance party to celebrate* Woooooo! Okay, enough of that lol, give this chapter a big VOTE if you enjoyed and keep going :D

Chapter 6 - Unexpected

Blossomfur and the rest of her patrol hurried into the camp. With a jolt of horror, Ashstar realized from her spot in the ferns that the cats were badly scratched and bitten, and with a twitch of her ears she rose out of the leaves and strode across the clearing to them.

"What happened?" Ashstar demanded once she caught up with them.

Blossomfur sank onto the ground.

"I chased a rabbit onto GoldenClan'sterritory," she panted.

"It must have run from the moors and through ours, then crossed the border. I chased it over the border, and a couple of foxtails later caught it. I hadn't realized I was over the border and tried to go back, but a GoldenClan patrol came. They accused me of preystealing, and then our patrols fought." Blossomfur blinked up at her leader. "I didn't mean to!"

Ashstar shook her head. "I cannot do anything about that." she sighed. "I understand it was an accident. I will not punish you, because you are already hurt for your actions. Try not to do that next time." Ashstar turned away and padded to her den, knowing the only thing that would help with her stress was to see her kits. When she ducked into the entrance, Pinekit tripped over his paws and stumbled over to his mother.

"Hi, Mama!" he squealed.

Ashstar touched noses with him, licking his head comfortingly. Then she looked around for Jaykit.

"Where's Jaykit?" she asked Pinekit.

Pinekit's tail drooped. "Over there," he muttered, pointing his nose to the corner of the den. Ashstar crossed the den in one bound and

sniffed and prodded the tiny lump of fur.

"Jaykit?" she said.

The fur stirred. Jaykit poked his head up sleepily.

"Hi, Mama," he slurred.

Ashstar touched her nose to his pelt. It felt very hot.

"Are you okay?" she asked, trying not to let her concern show. "Why are you sleeping on the floor? Your nest is right there."

Jaykit sat up. "I felt hot, so I lay on the floor." Then he began to tremble. "My fur is too hot for me! It's burning!" he wailed.

Ashstar's heart began to pound. What was going on? A moment later there were pawsteps and Bearthorn burst into the den.

"What's going-" he demanded, then halted, seeing Jaykit writhing on the floor.

"What's wrong with Jaykit?" Pinekit squeaked.

Ashstar couldn't comfort him. "My son! My son!" she croaked, her heart beating out of her chest/

Bearthorn raced out of the den. Moments later he reappeared with Goldenstripe, Willownose following her.

Goldenstripe shouldered her way through the den and dropped down beside the kit.

"Jaykit, can you hear me?" she demanded, giving him a shake.

Jaykit let out a soundless wail. Ashstar turned, shaking, to Bearthorn with a wail of her own.

"What's happening!" she cried.

He didn't answer. Instead, he crouched down, curling his claws in and out of the soil, and watching as Goldenstripe stuffed a herb into his son's mouth.

"Willownose, do something!" Ashstar begged, her paws sliding out from under her.

Willownose's eyes were dark.

"There's nothing I can do!" she murmured.

Goldenstripe had a note of panic in her voice, movement, and eyes now. She raced around, grabbing this herb and that, stuffing it into Jaykit's mouth, who's struggles were getting weaker and feebler.

Ashstar put a paw on Jaykit, not sure of what to do. As Goldenstripe shoved another leaf into his mouth, he slumped onto the floor. Ashstar sniffed him. Goldenstripe didn't say anything, but took him gently by the scruff and carried him away.

Ashstar collapsed onto the cave floor and let out a sorrowful wail. Willownose immediately took a stem of thyme leaves and made her eat it. Bearthorn stayed with her as she regained her consciousness.

"Is he dead?"Ashstar asked no one in particular.

Willownose stared into the den wall, but she was seeing something else.

"No, not yet," she said in a mythical voice. "But he might. Beware, Ashstar, your troubles are not over yet. More is yet to come!"

Then Willownose seemed to come out of a deep reverie. "Sorry, Ashstar, if I gave you a fright," she said, her voice normal again. "StarClan came to me just now," she continued.

Ashstar pricked her ears. "Who?"

"Starshine."

Ashstar shook her head, in wonder, in disbelief, and in exasperation. "Again?! She said that last time, too." she sighed.

Willownose comforted her with a lick. "It'll be okay." she murmured

Slowly Ashstar fell into troubled sleep.

Ashstar was awoken by a shrill yowl. She got to her paws sleepily and staggered out of her den. The yowl came again, and Ashstar quickly located the location of it. It was coming from the medicine den. Ashstar padded across the clearing. She ducked into the medicine den to find Goldenstripe wailing.

"What's wrong, Goldenstripe?" Ashstar exclaimed. She had a good dream and was fully rested, so she was confident that she could deal with the problem, whatever it was.

Goldenstripe turned, her teeth bared in a savage growl.

"Fox dung - StarClan is not finished with us!" she snarled. "Jaykit is dead!" Goldenstripe hurled the words at her so hard, that Ashstar felt them pierce her heart.

"No....no!" she mewed wretchedly, slumping down. Goldenstripe moved away, still hissing curses. In the nest behind her, lay a small grey shape, curled as if sleeping. Then Ashstar heard a yowl, but she couldn't see the cat. Then she realized her mouth was open in a shrill screech.

She took the small kit in her jaws, proceeded to the center of the clearing, laid him down, and ducked into her den to wake Bearthorn.

Bearthorn's P.O.V

Beartorn awoke, feeling a paw shaking him. Sleepily he batted it away. Ashstar was waking him. Blearily he blinked up at her.

He realized something was wrong at once. His mate's eyes were wild with despair, ears flattened against her head, and tail tucked tightly in between her legs.

"What's happened now?" he cried, leaping to his feet.

Ashstar turned and stalked out of the den, walked across the clearing and stopped in the middle. Bearthorn leaped to his paws and hurried after her. There was a small shape laying in the middle

of the clearing.

Bearthorn's breath caught in his throat. "No! No! No!" he exclaimed, coming to a halt beside Jaykit.

Ashstar crouched beside him as they stared at the limp body. Aroused by the noise, cats had begun to creep out of their dens. Pebbleshine was stretching outside the warriors' den when she saw Ashstar and Bearthorn huddled in the middle of the clearing, broke off, and bounded over. When she saw Jaykit, her eyes widened and she took a step back. Her sister, Petalfur, did the same thing, and they discussed it in hushed tones, starting over when Mudclaw joined them. Blossomfur, who had just woken up, skirted quietly and hastily around the grieving mates and onto the boulder. She gave a loud yowl that did not even make Bearthorn flinch. Everything was coming a long way off. The only thing that mattered was the limp body of Jaykit, who had died for no reason. He could dimly hear what Blossomfur was saying, but it was going into his subconsciousness.

"And so, Goldenstripe thinks this was a sign. We will grieve the death of Jaykit, but life must go on, otherwise we will become lazy, like the kittypets on our border. Be careful around Ashstar and Bearthorn, they might snap." There was sympathy in the deputy's voice as she looked out over the Clan. Bearthorn slumped down beside his mate, and they lay there, silently grieving. The day passed without much excitement. Patrols came and went, but Ashstar and Bearthorn didn't move much. Except for breathing and twitching they lay stone still. Finally, as dusk fell, Blossomfur called the Clan together for the vigil. He listened as the Clan told their memories. They sat in a circle silently after that. Once morning came around, Bearthorn turned and limped to the shade of a gorse bush. He didn't have any energy to go to a den, so this would have to do. Ashstar stumbled over and tripped over her own paws trying to lay down. At last they slept, and dreams did not disturb Bearthorn's sleep this time.

So sad >:(poor Jaykit

also, the way this works is that when a kit or apprentice joins StarClan, they automatically get their warrior name. Jaykit

becomes Jaywing.

Chapter 7 - the invasion

9 moons later

After Blossomfur finished with sorting patrols, Ashstar came up to her deputy, and with a flick of her tail as a greeting, joined her patrol. Lilyheart blinked and stepped back as her leader approached.

"Sorry, Ashstar," she mewed. "You can lead the patrol."

"No, no," Ashstar soothed. "It's okay, go ahead, just pretend I'm a regular warrior."

Lilyheart gave a somewhat worried glance and then squared her shoulders.

"Okay then, let's go," she mewed.

She had barely lifted a paw before Pinepaw raced out of camp, tail waving. Ashstar ran after him, laughing.

"Pinepaw, why are you acting like a kit?" she scolded, but the slight twitch of her ears showed otherwise. "Come back here and look for prey!"

Looking embarrassed, her son dropped back behind Lilyheart, and they both started to look for prey.

Ashstar was stalking a thrush when a terrified rabbit streaked across her path. Without giving much surprise, she neatly sidestepped and caught it in her jaws. She dropped it on the floor and crept after the thrush again. Once she had caught it, she went back to where the rabbit was. Earthheart was standing over it, looking forlornly at her.

"Sorry, Ashstar," the older cat sighed. "I almost caught it, but it ran into you. Apologies if I disturbed a trail."

Ashstar waved her tail. "Ish okay. Noh bigh dealth," she mumbled around the feathery thrush. They buried their prey and continued on in silence. Then Ashstar turned to Pinepaw. "Run along to the GoldenClan border, and come back when you smell it. It's not too far."

Pinepaw gave a nod and hared off through the trees. Ashstar walked on, appreciating the sounds of the birds. Then the undergrowth rustled, and Pinepaw pushed his head through.

"Here are the GoldenClan markers," he reported proudly.

"No, they're not," replied Earthheart crushingly. "Don't you know where they are? You're going to be a warrior soon, and you don't even know where the border is?!"

Pinepaw's face fell.

"But I smelled GoldenClan..."

Then Ashstar stopped.

"Earthheart.." she said slowly. "He's right!"

Earthheart sniffed the air, and a worried expression came onto her face.

"GoldenClan!"

Lilyheart sighed and unsheathed her claws. "Invaders!"

Ashstar let her creep forward, and stalked in as well. From their spot in the ferns, the SilverClan patrol could smell, hear, and see the GoldenClan patrol that was on their territory.

"Why are the trees like this!" complained one of the cats.

"There's not enough cover!" grumbled another.

"Quiet!" snapped the leading cat. "This is our territory now. Let's catch something!"

The first cat focused on something in the brambles, then crept up on a vole and snagged it in his claws. As he started boasting and the others started to argue, SilverClan got to work. Pinepaw, at a nod from Ashstar, hared away, back to the camp, to bring reinforcements. Lilyheart, Ashstar, and Eartheart spread out in a line and crept forward, a claw length every time. Then one of the cats sniffed the air.

"I smell SilverClan..." he said uncertainly.

Another one shoved him. "Of course you do, mouse-brain! It's their territory!"

The last one wrinkled his nose. "Great StarClan, they stink!"

"But the smell is stronger than before!"

Ashstar snorted with amusement when another scent flitted in. Pinepaw was back! With him were Blossomfur, Skybright, and Lemonheart. Ashstar waved her tail for battle technique 4 and they slipped away. Once the reinforcements were on the other side of Ashstar and her patrol, Skybright strolled out of the bushes.

"Preystealers! What do you think you're doing here?" she demanded, glaring at the vole that one of them caught.

It was hilarious: almost all the cats jumped and turned around with guilty expressions on their faces. The leading cat flicked his ear uncertainty. Ashstar recognized him, his name was Gorsepelt, with grey and black scruffy fur and pale yellow eyes.

One of the smaller cats stepped forward, teeth bared. His name was Stemleaf, Ashstar had seen him at Gatherings. He was black and grey and had mean blue eyes.

"Who are you to stop us?" he growled.

Skybright let out a snort.

"Me?" she laughed. "It's the rest of the cats surrounding you that you should be worried about!"

Stemleaf's lips twitched to cover his teeth again; he crouched and looked around fearfully. Ashstar snorted with laughter from where she was in the bushes, she and the rest of the cats stalked out of the undergrowth. Shoulder to shoulder, SilverClan stood in a tight circle around the invading GoldenClan.

"Uh oh..." muttered Windflight.

"Stay together, warriors!" commanded Gorsepelt, but he was shaking.

Ashstar ducked out from behind Blossomfur.

"Why are you here?" she asked, wrapping her tail around her paws as she sat down.

Stemleaf pressed himself closer to the ground. "Oh no.." he whispered. "Even their leader is here!"

Gorsepelt seemed to pull himself together, and he motioned with his tail. Immediately the patrol stood back to back, teeth bared. Ashstar did not respond kindly. She stood, nose to nose with GoldenClan, and yowled: "SilverClan, attack!"

As soon as the last word was out of her mouth, Skybright pounced on Windflight's back and pressed her muzzle against the floor. Skybright crouched on top of her, making sure she didn't get up.

Blossomfur and Earthheart immediately tackled Gorsepelt, Earthheart left Blossomfur crouching there and swiped at Stemleaf. Stemleaf hopped back neatly and rolled, taking her down in a flurry of thrashing paws. Twigleap crouched on Ashstar like a burr; no matter what the Ashstar tried, she couldn't buck the smaller warrior off. It left her no other choice, she immediately rolled, scraping Twigleap onto the ground. She twisted out of the grip and put a paw on the tawny warriors' neck. Twigleap, sensing danger, immediately went limp, and Ashstar left her there, bleeding slightly. She looked around and her heart leaped into her throat. Stemleaf was crouching on Earthheart, savagely scratching her and snarling. Ashstar flew to them and Stemleaf lunged at her, gripping her forlegs. Ashstar folded into a battle move, twisting out of range

and biting down on his paw. Stemleaf crouched down, spitting. Suddenly there were fresh battle cries and Whitestorm, Ravenheart, and Snowbreeze pounded into the clearing. Goldenstripe hurried along behind them.

Stemleaf took one look at the approaching cats and leaped away. Gorsepelt fled too; Twigleap, Windflight and the others behind him. Ashstar turned, horror-stricken, to Earthheart.

"Can you hear me?" she asked.

The warrior did not stir. Blood pooled around her stomach.

Ashstar turned to Goldenstripe pleadingly, who was already firing commands. "Lemonheart and Blossomfur, fetch as many cobwebs as you can!" she ordered. The warriors sped off.

"Snowbreeze, get some thyme leaves, there should be some in that bush."

After a while Goldenstripe drew back, breathing heavily.

"I think we can move her now," she concluded. "I think she'll live, but she'll have to spend the night in my den."

Ashstar drew out a sigh.

"Thank you, Goldenstripe," Ashstar said.

Goldenstripe dipped her head. "Always."

a couple hours later

Ashstar leaped onto her rock. "Alright, SilverClan!" she yowled. "I have decided who will be going to the Gathering."

Privately, it was a little clouded, and the Gathering could break up if Starclan covered the sun. "Blossomfur, Willownose, Rabbitclaw, Lilyheart, Ravenpelt, Snowbreeze, Brackenfur, Amberleaf, Treestorm, Cloudpelt, Earthheart, Pinepaw, Riverpaw, Lightningpaw, Maplecloud, and Lion! C'mon!"

Nearly all the cats who were called knew what to do, some of the cats that didn't glanced around uncertainly. The older warriors stepped closer together and put their tails on another cat's shoulder. Ashstar walked around, making sure everyone was touching. Then she touched Blossomfur with her own tail and focused. Silver light erupted around her and spread from her tail, to Blossomfurs', then to Willownose, and on and on and on. The light grew unbearable and Ashstar closed her eyes. She started spinning, but her limbs wouldn't move. When she stopped and the light died down, they were in the Gathering Clearing. Her cats shook out their fur, and followed Ashstar down. They saw MarbleClan already sitting there, and Ashstar led her cats into the crowd. Sundance was sitting neatly in the Great Tree, and Ashstar leaped up into it, claws out to keep her balance. The she-cats nodded to each other. After a few minutes, Sundance spoke.

"It looks like GoldenClan isn't coming," she said. "I'll start-"

GoldenClan had appeared from the trees. They jumped down elegantly and raced towards the rest of the cats, Rootleap at the lead. He did a graceful jump into the tree and sat in the curve of a branch, away from the other leaders. Ashstar barely suppressed a growl at the way he eyed them distrustfully; she could not wait to hear the logic behind his attack on her a few days ago.

Sundance stepped forward again.

"Hello, Rootleap," she said warmly. "As I was saying, I'll start. MarbleClan is doing well, although we fought stray dogs from the northern Twolegplace. They killed Zephyrswift, a young warrior, and we grieve for him. However, we have a new apprentice, Blackpaw."

A ruffled black furred she-cat with green eyes called out: "We showed those dogs!"

keep in mind this is a very important character, this black she-cat with green eyes, just remember her!

The cats applauded.

"Blackpaw! Blackpaw!"

A dark colored small cat licked his chest as his name was called out.

Then Ashstar stepped forward as Sundance sat down again.

"SilverClan is also doing well. We have three new apprentices, Pinepaw, Riverpaw and Lightningpaw."

At this the cats gave an even louder calling.

"Pinepaw! Riverpaw! Lightningpaw!"

Rootleap stepped forward, eyes glinting mysteriously. "GoldenClan was attacked by Sil-" he began.

Ashstar cut him off.

"I have one last piece of information. A GoldenClan patrol was found on my territory by a SilverClan patrol.. They were heavily outnumbered and didn't have a plan, and we easily beat them. Why did you do this, Rootleap?" she snarled at the brown leader.

Rootleap leaped to his paws, eyes flashing defiantly. "This is not true! We were attacked by you, not the other way around!"

Ashstar snorted. "Let me start from the beginning. We were on a border patrol, walking through the forest. I asked Pinepaw to go to the border and come back when he found it. He came back mere minutes later, when the actual border was farther away. We came to check it out and saw a patrol of around six cats on our territory, and we immediately made a plan. We got backup, and Skybright came in and called them out on it. They were terrified when the rest of my cats and I stepped in, and we outnumbered them greatly. We fought, and Stemleaf nearly killed one of my warriors! Do you want me to name the other warriors in the patrol? My other warriors got injured as well," she added resentfully.

Rootleap hissed. "Go ahead, but it won't help you."

Ashstar tossed her head. "Earthheart, come forward!" she snarled.

Earthheart stepped forward, out of the crowd, to look directly up at her.

"Name the mouse brains that attacked us," Ashstar ordered.

Earthheart dipped her head. "The patrol was led by Gorsepelt. There were also Stemleaf, Twigleap, Windflight, and a few others," she mewed.

Then her gaze flitted to Rootleap. "I almost died in the attack!" she snarled. "Ashstar saved me from Stemleaf. Look at this!" Earthheart turned, displaying her side, where there were nasty bruises and scratches.

Rootleap paled. "That's not...it can't...but..."

"Yes it is," growled Ashstar. "Are the cats in that patrol here?"

Rootleap looked away. "No."

Ashstar ignored him, and instead, turned to the crowd.

"If you were in this patrol, step forward! I shall speak to StarClan about this and you may be spared if you step forward now." her tone was icy.

Gorseleap crept out, followed by Windflight and Twigleap, looking scared. Another cat that Ashstar recognized from the attack was pushing Stemleaf out as well. He was glaring defiantly around. All the cats could see their wounds.

"So....." Ashstar drawled, glaring at Rootleap.

Rootleap's restraint was cracking. It was obvious he didn't like how another Clan leader was bossing his warriors around.

"Well- I- You have no right- "

Ashstar shook her head. "It was a completely unprovoked attack, and I am tired of you walking around on my territory and disrespecting SilverClan! I am waging war on GoldenClan!"

Before the last word was out of her mouth, the light dimmed.

There was a cloud across the sun!

StarClan was angry! Ashstar leaped down from the tree without a word. Rootleap pounded towards her, claws unsheathed and teeth bared. Ashstar smirked and drew SilverClan to her, and they disappeared from the clearing just as Rootleap sprang at her. When everything was normal again and the spinning stopped, they were back in their camp. Fuming, Ashstar jumped up onto the boulder, claws out in fury.

She watched as SilverClan gathered 'round, the queens talking among themselves.

Ashstar didn't wait for it to quiet down on its own. She raised her tail for silence and began her rant. She explained what happened at the Gathering, how Rootleap walked into her trap, and what Ashstar had done about it.

"...and so, after I wage war on GoldenClan, StarClan covers the sun." she finished with an annoyed flick of her tail. Then she narrowed her eyes. "We must prepare for battle! I will take patrols up to the moor to practice shímmering. Hunting patrols will happen in the morning starting tomorrow."

Ashstar motioned for Blossomfur.

"Take a hunting patrol out now and have two patrols practice battling," she mewed in an undertone to her deputy. Blossomfur nodded and motioned for another patrol. Ashstar turned back to the crowd.

"Lemonheart, Hawkfeather, Lilyheart, and Earthheart, you're coming with me to the moor. Jayfoot, take Breezefang, Mousetail, Tigertooth, Riverpaw, and Lightningpaw to the training arena. Featherbreeze, take another patrol to join them," she ordered, staring around icily.

The patrols she had asked for scurried out of camp, only Ashstar's patrol remained waiting for her. Still seething, Ashstar took the

lead, and together the patrol loped up to the moors. Letting go of her anger, Ashstar focused on the task.

"Here, I'll demonstrate, and then you can practice," she mewed.

She focused on the words: *What's seen is unseen, what is fur is air.* She drew in a breath and suddenly the sounds seemed farther off. Glancing down, Ashstar could see only the grass. Still keeping her breath, she slunk around her Clanmates.

"Where'd she go?" asked Lemonheart, looking around.

Lilyheart smiled. "She's shímmering!"

"Woah!" breathed Hawkfeather.

Moons of practice had Ashstar very good at magic. Without letting out her breath, she murmured, "Am I here? Am I there?"

Then she threw her voice around. "I am everywhere!"

Soon she finally breathed out and reappeared.

"That was cool!" cried Earthheart, looking impressed. The other cats nodded their agreement. Ashstar told them the special words, and walked around them as they practiced. But by the end of the day, only Hawkfeather and Lilyheart got it.

"Okay," Ashstar said. "I want you two to try and catch something while shímmering."

Silver light wreathed around them and as Ashstar blinked, there was only air. If she looked hard enough, she could see their outlines. Ashstar let the others practice, and waited for Lilyheart and Hawkfeather to come back.

Ashstar nearly jumped out of her fur as Hawkfeather reappeared next to her, a squirrel in his jaws.

"Great StarClan!" she laughed. "You scared me!"

Lilyheart crept up too. She had caught a thrush.

"Great job," Ashstar said warmly. "Let's get back to camp."

When the gorge came into view Ashstar flicked her ears.

"Make sure you keep practising!" she warned.

"We will," promised Eartheart.

Satisfied, Ashstar parted ways with the patrol and went to the training arena. She could hear Blossomfur drilling the warriors and sharpening their skills.

"Rear up now, all of you!" came the deputy's sharp growl. "Otherwise GoldenClan will get you!" There was a thud, and Ashstar winced.

"Mousetail, higher than that! And faster! You must learn to balance! Riverpaw, let me see what you've been doing.....okay, very good, but more strength in that swipe! Lightningpaw, when he lunges, you can jump to the side and flash out a paw. Let me see you do that now.....Now that was good! Breezefang, roll! Don't just lay there, roll!"

There was another thud and Ashstar flinched again. She walked in to see all the cats practicing.

"Hey, Ashstar!" Blossomfur panted, running up to her. "Did you finish shímmering?"

Ashstar dipped her head. "Indeed, I have," she said. "How are the cats' battle skills?" she asked.

"Very good," reported Blossomfur with a twitch of her ears. "I was impressed how Riverpaw and Lightningpaw work together. We have a great battle force!" she finished eagerly.

"Great!" Ashstar flicked her tail. "C'mon."

She led the cats back to camp in silence. There, she leaped up on the boulder.

"SilverClan!" she mewed commandingly. "The time has come!

Follow me, we shall launch our first attack on GoldenClan!"

She leaped down again and raced out of camp and into the forest. The thud of paws behind her silenced, and the SilverClan patrol raced sure footedly and quietly to the GoldenClan border. Once they crossed, Ashstar lifted her tail.

"Spread out," she ordered. The cats split accordingly. Ashstar quickly marked a tree, looking around to make sure everyone else was copying.

Soon there was a yowl and a patrol of GoldenClan warriors pelted out of the wood. Ashstar spun around from the bush she was marking and launched herself at Tornear. She bowled him over and crouched on top of him, heart pounding. All around her the cats were fighting; Blossomfur was clawing at Twigleap, Lilyheart was shímmering up to another cat who had pinned Treestorm down, Windflight was biting Hawkfeather, and Riverpaw was bravely defending his littermate from Stemleaf. Ashstar finished with Tornear and pelted across the clearing. She stopped short, drew in a breath, and repeated the shimmering chant in her head. Invisible, she crept across the clearing to Rootleap, and rose up behind him. Letting her breath out, she slashed at Rootleap, who was fighting Pinepaw. Together, mother and son drove the leader across the border.

"This piece of territory is ours now," Ashstar snarled. Rootleap staggered and fell to the ground. Pinepaw gave him a kick, and rage burning in his eyes, Rootleap turned tail.

"Retreat!" he yowled, stumbling away.

Ashstar flew back to the battle, slamming her shoulder into another cat. The cat, Shadowpelt, turned with surprising speed and slid under Ashstar. He launched himself up, and unbalanced, Ashstar fell to the ground. Her shoulder on fire, Ashstar sprang once more. She managed to get his flank, but he was already fleeing, giving her a smirk as he ran. Ashstar stumbled to her paws again, growling. Shadowpelt was so full of himself! She turned away, making sure all the GoldenClan cats had fled. To her relief, Ashstar could tell that none of SilverClan's warriors were too badly injured. Pinepaw was

licking his flank, Lightthunder had clumps of fur missing, Hawkfeather had a couple of scratches on his shoulder, Blossomfur was rubbing her eye, and Lilyheart was nursing a broken claw. Ashstar limped across the clearing and commandfully led her cats back into their forest.

holy starclan! this chapter is soooo long! about 3k words if you were wondering. hope youre enjoying it so far!

also please lmk if i made a error, and ill go back in and fix it. ty!

btw, shout out to XxLionFangxX (not on wattpad) for helping me edit!

The Hunt

Ashstar hissed, watching a rabbit creep across the grass. She stalked up to it, hidden by the ferns. Then she pounced, and it went limp. She carried her catch to the shelter of a nearby tree and settled down to eat it. Alas, when she opened her mouth to sink her teeth into the prey, it disappeared and a cat came out of the trees.

"Silverblaze!" mewed Ashstar joyously. Silverblaze was one of the first leaders of SilverClan, and sometimes visited Ashstar in dreams.

"Hello, Ashstar," Silverblaze greeted the tabby cat in her musical tone. "Great catch!"

Ashstar dipped her head in respect. "Thank you, Silverblaze!" she exclaimed. Then her brow furrowed. "Why are you in my dream?" she asked.

Silverblaze rolled her eyes. "What, I can't drop in to see you?" she teased. "I have to tell you something.." she sighed, her voice drooping.

Ashstar stiffened. "It isn't good news, isn't it," she murmured.

Silverblaze shook her head. "Indeed, it is bad news." she muttered softly. "StarClan thinks that you did not make a good choice in waging war on GoldenClan. Maybe you should declare yourself the winner and move on?" she suggested pleadingly.

Ashstar allowed herself a small growl. "Silverblaze, I understand you dont like bloodshed, but we are cats. We will fight to win." Her voice softened. "What does Silverfang think?"

Silverblaze looked up. "Silverfang!" she called.

Ashstar's heart pounded so hard, she was sure Silverblaze could hear it. Was her mother finally going to come see her, after all this time?

Then a starry shape bounded down from the sky.

"Silverfang!" Ashstar choked out, and rushed to her mother, embracing her tightly.

"Hello, Ashstar," she mewed, her eyes sparkling. "You might not like this, but what Silverblaze says is true." Silverfang stood up straighter, looked Ashstar in the eyes, and rested her tail on her shoulder. "You know bloodshed is not always the answer."

Ashstar rested her head on her mother's shoulder. "Are you sure?" she whispered.

"Mother knows best," Silverfang breathed, and with another loving look, she disappeared.

Silverblaze stepped forward. "Do you agree?" she asked hesitantly.

Ashstar sighed. "Alright then. Is it okay if I have one more battle? Then I'll finish it!"

Silverblaze dipped her head, looking relieved. "Perfect."

Then the woods disappeared, leaving Ashstar with her very confused thoughts.

Ashstar woke blissfully, and rolled onto her belly in a stretch, yawning. Bearthorn was grooming himself next to her, relaxed.

"How about a hunt together?" she asked brightly, waving her tail.

Bearthorn perked up. "Sure thing!"

They padded out of the gorge, pelts brushing as they walked. Once they were on the path, Ashstar sniffed the air.

"Do you smell that?" she breathed.

Bearthorn put his muzzle down. "Two rabbits!" he whispered.

Ashstar waved him away with her tail.

"Flank me!" she mouthed. Bearthorn nodded once and stalked into

the undergrowth. Ashstar peered over the bush, and once Bearthorn had slithered into position, launched herself at the bigger rabbit, which was now munching on leaves. It gave a cry of surprise and proceeded to kick her off. It was stronger than she expected, Ashstar lost her grip and was flung back, landing on her shoulder. However, Bearthorn was too strong for it. He was pinning it down, but the rabbit was still kicking with all its might, and he wasn't able to finish it. Ashstar got up, shaking her head dizzily, and leaped once more. Together the two mates felled the rabbit, and stood panting over their kill.

"Great job!" said Bearthorn, scratching his ear.

Ashstar rolled over, scratching her back on the grass.

"Ouch!" she muttered. "The rabbit got me good!" Bearthorn rushed to her side.

"Are you okay?" he asked, licking her ear comfortingly.

Ashstar gave a small groan. "Yeah, I'm fine," she said. "Just a little sore."

Bearthorn helped her get up, and then seized the rabbit in his jaws. "Do you want to help with the rabbit or do you want to go on ahead?" he asked.

Ashstar shook her head before bending to pick up the prey.

"I'm fine," she insisted.

Together they carried the rabbit back to camp. Once they came in, Snowbreeze bounded up.

"Great catch!" she mewed admirably.

Blossomfur also ducked out of the warriors' den to greet them.

"Wow!" she cried, sniffing the prey.

Ashstar and Bearthorn dragged the rabbit a fox length more to the fresh-kill pile. Pinepaw approached his parents, pride shining in his

eyes.

"Very, very good catch!" he trilled. "Take me next time!"

Ashstar purred.

"Of course, Pinepaw," she mewed, amused. Pinepaw ducked his head and went off on his patrol.

Ashstar turned to Bearthorn once he left. "I have something to tell you..." she mewed hesitantly.

Bearthorn stared at her. "Bad news?" he asked worriedly, touching his nose to hers.

"No, no," she purred. "I-I'm expecting kits."

Both cats stood shock-still for a split second. Then Bearthorn rushed to her side.

"But that's wonderful!" he cried, licking her head. "You need to tell me as soon as you find out! You shouldn't worry that I'll be upset!"

Ashstar grinned. "Alright, alright," she said. Then she shoved her mate away as he tried to push her towards the medicine den.

"Oh, come on," she said, half-amused, half-annoyed.

Bearthorn did not listen. "No, no!" he said. "I should've taken you as soon as we came back, you hurt yourself! And now you're expecting kits, you need treatment!"

Ashstar shook her head, exasperated. "Fiiiine!" she said, groaning.

Finally, she let him guide her to the medicine den, where Willownose was hard at work, sorting herbs at high speed.

She looked up when they entered. "How may I help you?"

Bearthorn puffed out his chest. "She's expecting kits," he said proudly. "My kits."

Willownose jumped to her paws. "Awesome!"

Bearthorn made Ashstar turn around.

"And she got hurt while out hunting," he said worriedly.

"No matter, no matter," Willownose murmured, shifting through herbs. Finding the ones she needed, she returned to the front of the den.

"Lie down for me, please," she mewed briskly, patting the spare nest with her paw.

Ashstar obeyed and sank onto the moss. She let out a sigh of relief as Willownose examined her gently.

In a bit, Willownose drew back.

"You have about two moons, or perhaps one and a half to go!" she said. "There seems to be around three kits, all of them in good shape. And you'll have a bruise on your flank for a little while, but it'll go away. You're all good, Ashstar!"

Bearthorn licked Ashstar's head again, making her laugh.

"Let's go make your nest in the nursery," he murmured, leading her out of the den, resting his tail on her shoulder.

Hope you enjoyed this chapter!

Forbidden

Riverpaw bounced into camp with his mentor, Leafshadow. She gave him a smile, and he raced away to the fresh-kill pile.

He crouched down and began picking around for his favorite food, a thrush. Finding it under a rabbit, he carried it to some ferns to eat. It filled his empty belly and gave him his much needed energy. Groaning with delight, he finished his meal and went to find his mother. Bearthorn was resting in the shade with Lightthunder, Skybright was sharing a rabbit with Mousetail, and Treestorm was grooming himself under a tree. Riverpaw strolled around, looking in the dens, He found Amberleaf washing her paws in the stream.

"Hi!" he exclaimed, padding up to her.

Amberleaf touched noses with him.

"Hello there, precious," she greeted him.

Riverpaw pressed himself into his mother's fur.

"Leafshadow taught me the leap-and-hold today!" he explained, showing her a little demonstration and crashing to the ground.

Amberleaf smiled.

"I'm glad! You're my little warrior, aren't you!"

Riverpaw ducked his head. "Yes!" Then he yawned. "I'm going to bed now," he said.

Amberleaf licked his head. "Good night, sweetheart."

Riverpaw padded to the apprentice's den to find his brother, Lightningpaw, already curled up in his nest. He blinked and raised his head as Riverpaw came in.

"Hey," he murmured, his voice heavy with sleep.

"Hi," Riverpaw said. "Goodnight."

The next morning, Leafshadow woke Riverpaw quite briskly.

"You have a solo task today," she mewed, flicking her tail back and forth.

Riverpaw brightened. "Yay!"

Leafshadow continued, "You will hunt until midday along the MarbleClan border, and bring back your prey."

Riverpaw bounced with excitement. "I won't let you down," he promised.

In a couple of minutes, he was sniffing the air, a couple of fox-lengths away from the MarbleClan border. Then an unfamiliar scent caught his attention.

I wonder what this scent is... Riverpaw thought, deciding to go after it. He put his muzzle to the floor and tracked the smell to a clearing. Warily, he creeped into the clearing, looking behind him. Suddenly the scent wafted over him, as fresh as it could be. Riverpaw whipped his head around and saw an odd animal that looked like a mixture of a cat and a dog standing there, facing the other side of the clearing. It had neat, pointy ears and an orange coat. It was a fox! The fox was bigger than Riverpaw, and it looked dangerous - and hungry.

"Oh, no," Riverpaw whimpered, pressing himself to the ground as much as he could go.

The fox sniffed the air, its auburn fur glinting in the sun. Suddenly the fox spun around, her hazel eyes fixed or Riverpaw. Trying to get his frozen paws to move, he tried to creep away. He couldn't move! He could only watch, horrified, as the fox licked its lips and stalked forward towards him. She then sank into a crouch, tensed her muscles, and leaped right at him. Riverpaw half-closed his eyes, knowing there was nothing else left to do. Suddenly a streak of black flashed across his vision. He then realized the death blow had

not come and opened his eyes.

A ruffled young black she-cat was fighting the fox, snapping at it with all her teeth and claws. What amazed Riverpaw was that she was doing it silently, no battle cries needed. She was such a good fighter! The fox was already having second thoughts about being there, but to make sure it left, Riverpaw got to his paws and hurried forward to help. He unsheathed his claws and gave the fox a couple of strong blows on the flank. She whimpered and, after one last snap of her teeth, backed away, blood flowing from her wounds. Riverpaw stood still, letting go of his shock. The black she-cat turned to him, her paws red with the vixen's blood.

"Are you okay?" she asked, rubbing at one of her green eyes.

"Yes, I'm fine," Riverpaw muttered, examining himself for any injuries.

"What's your name?" both cats asked at the same time.

Riverpaw blushed and ducked his head. "I'm Riverpaw," he said.

The black she-cat dipped her head, unfazed. Nothing scared this one!

"I'm Stormheart," she said, staring into his eyes. "You're welcome."

It took Riverpaw a while to understand what she was talking about.

"Oh," he mewed, realizing. "Thanks for saving me, Stormheart. You fight pretty well, for a MarbleClan cat."

Stormheart dipped her head again. "I got my warrior name yesterday, and it's still confusing not being called Stormpaw," she admitted, her voice softening.

"That must be odd," Riverpaw agreed, laying his tail on her shoulder.

The two of them gradually sank into a sitting position, talking about their apprentice duties, and how it felt to fight and hunt. Soon they reached the topic of GoldenClan.

"How was it, attacking GoldenClan?" Stormheart asked, seeming genuinely interested.

"It was scary at first," Riverpaw admitted. "But me and my brother, Lightningpaw, stuck together and helped each other fight. We sent Stemleaf away with his tail between his legs!" he laughed, relieving the memory.

Stormheart's eyes glowed in admiration. "That's amazing! Stemleaf is a big, strong warrior, and he's really vicious!"

Riverpaw nodded. "That's true!"

Then Riverpaw glanced up and worries flooded his gaze.

"Oh, great StarClan! It's past midday!"

Stormheart just shrugged. "So what?"

"I promised Leafshadow I would be back at camp now, with prey!"

Stormheart gazed at him sympathetically. "I'll help you!" she suggested eagerly. "I'll bring prey to the border here, so you'll get home quickly!"

Riverpaw quickly agreed, and fluffing out his fur, he stood up.

"Meet you back here in a little while!" he said.

"Okay," Stormheart promised. They went their separate ways. Riverpaw quickly uncovered a mouse nest and carefully sliced one, two, three, four mouse throats, and putting them aside, dug a small hole for them. He dropped them in and went on. Then he caught a squirrel and returned to wait for Stormheart. She did not take long but dropped a rabbit at his feet.

"Good luck," she said. But when Riverpaw looked into her eyes he knew she didn't want him to leave. As he made to turn away, she moved quite suddenly.

"Wait!" she cried. "Can we keep meeting here, every couple of days?"

Riverpaw felt an unknown emotion surge up inside him.

"Of course, Stormheart," he mewed. With a final dip of his head, he turned away and carried his prey home, feeling Stormheart's gaze on him the whole time.

"Riverpaw, where have you been?" cried Treestorm when he hurried into camp with his prey. "Your mother and I have been worried sick - Amberleaf, dear, I found him!"

Amberleaf burst out of the undergrowth and enveloped him in her fur. "Ashstar! Ashstar!" she called, her voice slightly muffled by Riverpaw's fur. Ashstar ducked out of the nursery, her belly swollen with kits.

"You found him!" she exclaimed, coming over.

"Yes, I did," Amberleaf said. She rounded on Riverpaw. "Where have you been, why did you show up late?"

"I-I-" stammered Riverpaw, racking his brain for a good excuse, then decided to tell the truth - some of it.

"Well, I-I went to the MarbleClan border, and was hunting, I was! I found a mouse nest, and got some prey there-" he pointed to the fresh-kill pile, where there were some mice- "but then, I smelled something unusual, and followed the scent trail, and stumbled upon a fox! I ended up fighting it and scared it off. I continued hunting, but I didn't keep track of time, so I came back late." he finished, hoping that it sounded okay.

Amberleaf furrowed her brows. "Okay," she said reluctantly. She bent to pick up his rabbit and then gave him an inquisitive look. "Why does this smell like MarbleClan?" she asked, staring at him. "And why do you smell like MarbleCln?"

Riverpaw paled, wondering how to answer this question. "Er-I.." he muttered. "I was at the MarbleClan border..." he started, heart pounding out of his chest. "And when I was fighting the fox, I-er...accidentally rolled on the border, and I made my catch close to the border as well," Riverpaw invented, scrabbling his paws.

Ashstar looked suspicious, but she accepted it without comment.

Riverpaw was relieved, even if different Clan members could be friends, he didn't want SilverClan to think he was a traitor to his own Clan!

Amberleaf licked his head one more time and departed to the warriors' den. Riverpaw stood still, wondering how in the world he had managed to get away with meeting a MarbleClan cat in secret. He would have to be much more careful from now on!

He trotted to the fresh-kill pile, took two mice, and padded to a tree stump to eat. Crouching down, he couldn't help thinking about Stormheart. What was she doing now, and was she thinking about him too?

While he was eating, Moonpaw came up to him.

"Hi, Riverpaw!" she called, settling down beside him. "Mind if I share with you?"

Riverpaw pushed the remainder of the mice to her. "It's okay, you can have it," he mewed. "I'm done anyway."

Moonpaw looked disappointed. "Wait, no!" she cried, laying her white tail on his shoulder.

Riverpaw shrugged it off. "What?"

Moonpaw moved closer. "I wanted to hear about the fox attack!" she exclaimed. "Are you hurt? Were you scared?"

Riverpaw sighed. "Not really," he said, turning away. "And I'm tired, I want to go to sleep."

Moonpaw was the last cat he wanted to talk to right now.

But she followed him. "I changed my mind, I'm not hungry, I think I should sleep too!" she called, slipping into the apprentices' den after him.

Riverpaw groaned. The last thing he needed was another she-cat

padding after him. He stumbled to his nest, circled a few times, and lay down. Suddenly, there was a scratching noise. Riverpaw raised his head and sighed as he saw Moonpaw dragging her nest next to his. There were a couple of growls as the other apprentices complained.

"Sorry, sorry," Moonpaw apologized. Once she reached Riverpaw, she laid down and whispered to him.

"Good night, Riverpaw! Sweet dreams!"

Riverpaw turned away from her and closed his eyes, thinking about Stormheart. Was she sleeping too? Or was she awake, thinking about him? Riverpaw fell into an uneasy sleep, over-aware of Moonpaw's snores next to him.

Stormheart and Riverpaw kept meeting, making sure to keep their meetings random so no one would find out about their friendship. One day, two moons after their first meeting, something happened that would change Riverpaw forever.

Riverpaw tucked his muzzle under his tail.

Please, Moonpaw, just shut up already! he thought as the white and black she-cat kept talking about her catch. He steadied his breathing until her voice faltered, and then she rustled in her nest, and silence. Riverpaw gave a sigh of relief and waited until Moonpaw was fully asleep, then quickly slipped out of the den. He crept out of the dirt place tunnel, trying to blend in with the leaves and shadows to make sure Hawkfeather didn't see him. Once he was out of camp, he hared away, towards the MarbleClan border.

"Stormheart!" he gasped, catching his breath. "Stormheart!"

"I'm here!" came the response, and Stormheart herself slipped out of the shadows.

Riverpaw didn't move for a second. He could've sworn that she got prettier and prettier every time he saw her.

Shaking his head, he pushed that thought away and focused.

"Am I late?" Riverpaw asked.

Stormlheart nodded. "A little bit. What kept you?"

Riverpaw groaned. "There's an apprentice padding after me," he sighed.

Stormheart looked angry for a second, more than she had when she was fighting the fox. Then her expression changed into forced amusement. "Oh, really?" she asked.

"Yeah." Then Riverpaw changed the subject, tucking his forelegs under him. "You said you wanted to tell me something really important last meeting?" he queried, looking her up and down.

The normally fierce warrior looked lost for a moment.

"I....." she started.

Riverpaw interrupted her. "Whatever you say, I promise I won't tell anyone, and I won't be mad at you, and I promise it'll be okay."

Stormheart looked relieved. "O-okay," she mewed, a little nervously. "When I saw you, being attacked by the fox, I was drawn to you. And even though you were scared out of your fur, you still helped me scare it away. And I knew that if I didn't speak up, then I wouldn't see you untill the Gatherings." she admitted, stumbling over her words. Riverpaw nodded, confused where she was going, but foreboding growing in his stomach.

"And my parents, friends, and Clanmates are telling me to take a mate, but there isn't anyone I was interested in. That is, until I met you."

She said the last sentence boldly and then broke off, waiting for his response. Riverpaw's emotion's felt scrambled. *What does she mean by what she's saying? And does she mean what I think she means?*

"So.." he started, his voice barely a whisper. "Are you thinking what I'm thinking?"

Stormheart smiled. "Yes," she whispered, then moved forward and

touched her muzzle to his. "I love you."

Hope you enjoyed this chapter!

Transferred

Riverpaw, Lightingingpaw, Pinepaw, Moonpaw, and Smallpaw were all in the apprentices' den, their mothers' anxiously grooming their kits. Riverpaw had stood patiently waiting as his mother fussed over him and now held back a laugh as Lightningpaw tried to wiggle away from Amberleaf's tongue.

"No- I don't want- I'm fine!" he mewed, trying to get away.

Amberleaf pinned him down lightly, finished with his fur, and then sat back, pride shining in her eyes.

Riverpaw licked his chest subconsciously. Today, all the apprentices were getting their warrior names! Riverpaw started as Ashstar's call vibrated throughout the camp.

"Every cat come to join us for a meeting!" she yowled.

Riverpaw's tail twitched, and he poked his head out to see the cats gather.

Ashstar continued once the warriors were silently gazing at her. "We have come together because of the making of five new warriors."

She paused, and Riverpaw padded out of the den, the rest of the soon-to-be warriors behind him. Together they came to a halt in front of Ashstar. She jumped down and looked around.

"Cloudpelt, is Moonpaw ready to become a warrior?" she asked.

The white warrior dipped his head. "Indeed."

"Moonpaw, from now on you will be known as Moonlight," Ashstar said, tail wagging slightly. Moonlight gave a skip of delight at her new name and touched her nose to Ashstar's.

"Brightclaw, is Smallpaw ready to become a warrior?"

"She is!"

"Smallpaw, you will now be known as Smallfoot."

"Tigertooth, is Lightningpaw ready?"

"He is ready and more!"

"Lightningpaw, from now on, your name will be Lightningheart."

Riverpaw's heartbeat quickened as the Ashstar looked right at him.

"Leafshadow, is Riverpaw worthy of becoming a warrior?" she asked.

"Yes, he is," Riverpaw's mentor answered.

"Riverpaw, you will now be known as Riverstorm."

Riverstorm gave an excited flick of his ears, touched noses with Ashstar, and stood off to the side as she continued.

Yes! My warrior name! And it's kinda like Stormheart's!

"...you will now be known as Pinetail."

The Clan cheered as Pinetail touched noses with his mother.

"Moonlight! Smallfoot! Lightningheart! Riverstorm! Pinetail!"

Moonlight was cheering only Riverstorm's name though, she had a hard, blazing look in her eyes as she did. Sighing, Riverstorm padded over to her.

"Knock it off," he told her, glaring at the floor.

Moonlight stared at him, eyes wide. "Knock off what?"

"The last thing I need is a she-cat padding after me!" he snarled, lashing his tail. "I don't want a mate!"

Except for Stormheart, maybe, he added in his head.

Moonlight looked angry. "Fine!" she said, lashing her tail and drawing back her lips. But under her anger Riverstorm could see she was hurt.

Riverstorm stalked away, feeling no resentment towards what he had done.

****six sunrises later****

"Riverpaw! Riverpaw! I'm thinking about joining your Clan."

Riverstorm stared at her, thinking he had misheard. "Well, first of all, it's Riverstorm now. And you're *what*?"

Stormheart padded closer to him and twined her tail with his. He breathed in her warm, familiar scent and sighed comfortingly.

She looked back at him, amused. "Congrats on your new name. I'm thinking of joining your Clan," Stormheart repeated, glancing at her paws once.

"I-well-" Riverstorm stammered. Suddenly he found his voice.

"That's wonderful!" he cried, pressing closer to her.

Stormheart laughed softly. "Do you know why?" she asked, her voice filling with a little fear.

Riverstorm pulled away from her. "Why?"

Stormheart hesitated, her green eyes darting across his face.

"My mother is Sundance, remember?" she whispered. "And since Sundance is thinking of joining GoldenClan in their war with SilverClan, I don't think it's safe for me there anymore."

Riverstorm simply looked at her. "That's perfectly fine, SilverClan will be glad to have you!"

"You don't understand!" Stormheart whispered, glancing down. "I-

I'm expecting kits."

Riverstorm stared at her as his mate's words hit him. "My kits?"

Stormheart laughed. "Of course, you mouse-brain!" she mewed happily. "But Sundance will be furious when she finds out! So I want to join SilverClan," she said, suddenly looking doubtful. "Oh, Riverstorm, am I making the right decision?"

Riverstorm gave her a smile. "Stormheart, believe in yourself. I'll always be here to protect you, don't worry," he said gently.

Stormheart returned the smile weakly. "Oh Riverstorm! I still can't believe it! We're going to be parents!"

Riverstorm flicked his ears, pressing closer to her. "I'm glad."

***

Riverstorm rose to his paws. "Are you ready to make your decision?" he asked.

A couple of sunrises had passed since Stormheart told him she was expecting kits, and now Riverstorm wanted her safely in his camp as soon as possible.

The black she-cat stood up, her green eyes blazing with determination. "I am," she replied confidently. "I will join SilverClan!"

Riverstorm purred. "Okay, let's go!" he mewed.

They made their way through the forest, Riverstorm helping his mate get over tree trunks and roots. When they reached the gorge, Riverstorm turned to Stormheart. "No matter what, I will stay with you," he promised.

She nodded, looking a little nervous. They crossed the threshold and entered. The cats that were in the camp froze, seeing an unknown warrior.

Brackenfur leaped down from where he was, on top of a den, and

stood nose to nose with Stormheart.

"What are you doing here?" Brackenfur snarled, his fur fluffing up.

"I come in peace," Stormheart meowed, her neck fur standing on end.

Riverstorm thrust himself between them. "Lay off, Brackenfur," he told the ginger tom. "Can't you see she's expecting kits?"

Brackenfur took a pace back, but his eyes were still smoldering. "And what do you think you're doing, bringing an enemy warrior - MarbleClan by the smell of it - into the center of our home?" he hissed.

Riverstorm laid his tail comfortingly on his mate's shoulders. "I'll take that up with Ashstar, not you," he answered evenly.

"I'm her brother, I'm sure you can say to me what you can say to her!" Brackenfur mewed angrily.

Riverstorm shook his head, turned and walked up to the leader's den, Stormheart trailing behind him.

"Ashstar?" he asked, fidgeting on the spot. "Can I come in?"

"Come in, Riverstorm," came the reply. Riverstorm gave Stormheart a reassuring look, and ducked into the den. It was cool and shady, with moss piled high against the wall.

"What is it?" the grey she-cat asked him, curled around her large belly.

Riverstorm sighed. "You're probably going to be angry with me, but I must tell you something. I took a mate from another Clan," he began, ignoring Ashstar's sharp intake of breath. "And she's expecting my kits. She also has valuable information, and she wishes to join SilverClan."

Ashstar was silent. "Where is she, then?" she asked after a pause.

Riverstorm turned his head. "Stormheart!" he called.

The black she-cat padded in, her tail curled around her semi-swollen belly.

Ashstar got up, circled around her once or twice, and then sat back down.

"Interesting, interesting," she muttered. "What's your information, Stormheart?"

Stormheart looked down at her paws. "Sundance is planning on joining GoldenClan in the war," she meowed, her green eyes portraying no emotion.

Ashstar closed her eyes. "Oh, Great StarClan!" she murmured out loud.

"Do you know when they'll attack?"

"Yes," Stormheart meowed, glancing up. "At the full moon."

Ashstar dipped her head. "Thank you for the information. Of course you may stay, and Rivertsorm can help you get a nest in the nursery. I can tell you're no threat. Riverstorm, you broke the code, so you will have a punishment, but you're okay. I shall announce to the Clan that they should treat you as their own queen," she meowed warmly, and dismissed them from the den. Once they left, Moonlight, who had come out of the warriors den, spotted Riverstorm.

"Hey Riversto-" she started, then noticed Stormheart. "Who are you?" she asked rudely.

Stormheart drew herself up, her green eyes sparking with anger. "I am Stormheart, Riverstorm's mate, and pregnant with his kits," she hissed proudly.

Moonlight turned on Riverstorm. "You said you didn't want a mate!" she meowed angrily. "And now you are going to have kits?! With her?!"

Riverstorm stepped in front of his mate. "Except for Stormheart."

Moonlight growled. "I can't believe this!" she muttered under her breath and walked off.

"Is she the one that was padding after you?" Stormheart asked Riverstorm, pressing into his fur as they headed to the nursery.

"Yes," Riverstorm answered sharply. "Come, let's go make you a nest in the nursery!"

They padded to the den and saw Mousetail curled in her nest. The grey she-cat blinked open her green eyes when they walked in.

"Hi, Mousetail!" Riverstorm purred. "This is my mate, Stormheart."

Mousetail furrowed her brows. "Is she from another Clan?"

"Yes, but Ashstar is okay with her."

Stormheart dipped her head. "Greetings."

Mousetail flicked her ears and lay down again.

Riverstorm and Stormheart spent the afternoon grabbing moss and using it to make a large nest.

"There," Riverstrom mewed proudly, drawing back and admiring his work. "Hop in, let's see if you fit!"

Stormheart purred as she stepped into the nest. She circled once and lay down, her green eyes filled with amusement.

"There's so much space," she meowed, stretching her paws out in front of her.

Stormheart was right. There was room for another cat in the nest!

Riverstorm flicked his tail with amusement and curled up next to her. "That's good!" he purred. "We have enough room for ourselves and our family!" he said the last couple of words with a fond light in his eyes, and touched his tail to Stormheart's belly.

Stormheart continued purring. "Okay, okay," she laughed, getting to

her paws. "Where are the other cats? I want to meet them!"

"Let's go!" Riverstorm meowed, getting up.

They ducked out of the nursery.

They went to the warriors den, Riverstorm showing secret entrances out of the camp

"Hi, Snowbreeze, Ravenheart, Amberleaf," Ruverstorm greeted the warriors.

Snowbreeze looked up. "Hi, Riverstorm!"

Amberleaf got to her paws and touched noses with him. "Who's this?" she asked him, looking at Stormheart. "And she's expecting kits too?"

Riverstorm gulped. He didn't know how his mother would react to him having a mate, so he squared his shoulders.

"This is Stormheart, my mate."

Amberleaf drew back. "Your mate?" she asked, looking Stormheart up and down. Stormheart nodded.

"Are you Riverstorm's mother?" she asked the ginger she-cat.

Amberleaf nodded.

Stormheart looked delighted. "Riverstorm has told me much about you! It's great to meet you at last!"

Amberleaf purred, Riverstorm could tell his mate had said the right thing.

"Well, we'll be off now," he said out loud. "I'm going to have Stormheart checked out, then we are going to get some sleep."

Ravenheart waved his tail. "Okay, bye!"

Riverstorm laid his tail on his mate's shoulders. "Here's the medicine den," Riverstorm explained as they walked. "Let's go say hi to the

medicine cats."

Riverstorm led Stormheart to the opening of the den. He showed her where the supplies were, and introduced her to WIllownose and Goldenstripe.

"She's expecting kits - my kits," Riverstorm mewed, touching noses with Willownose.

Goldenstripe patted the nest next to her.

"Lay down, Stormheart," she said.

The black she-cat dipped her head and stepped into the nest, laying down with her belly showing.

Willownose watched over Goldenstripe's shoulder as she examined Stormheart.

"Looks like two kits," Goldenstripe reported in a minute or two. "They should come in around a couple moons."

Willownose pressed her ear gently to her belly.

"Hi, little kits!" she purred. "Grow big and strong so you can be good warriors!"

Stormheart purred. "Indeed!"

Riverstorm shoved her playfully. "Don't get too comfortable, dear!" he teased. "We still need to walk *all the way* to the nursery!"

Stormheart purred, her green eyes twinkling with amusement. "If only I could make it that far!"

Riverstorm purred and helped her get to her paws. They made their way slowly to the nursery.

"Goodnight, Riverstorm," Stormheart yawned, curling up with him in the nest.

Riverstorm purred. "Goodnight, Stormheart!"

Final battle and kits

SilverClan, ATTACK!" Ashstar hollered, and threw herself at the battle patrol made out of MarbleClan and GoldenClan cats. Riverstorm leaped after her, pinning a GoldenClan tom to the ground with a mighty swipe. The tom rolled over, crushing Riverstorm. He couldn't breathe! He thrashed wildly with no luck. Suddenly the weight on him vanished; Riverstorm looked up and saw Lightningheart battling with the tom, tripping him and driving him to the ground again. Once the tom had run away, Riverstorm came up to his brother.

"Thanks! Lightningheart, you fight really well!"

The tom gave a nod and leaped back into the fray.

Riverstorm found Bluetail fighting a tortishell she-cat, and Riverstorm flew over to help. After she ran away, Riverstorm found Smallfoot trapped under two GoldenClan warriors, while another creeped torwards her. They were all much bigger than her.

"Mouse-dung!" he muttered and slammed one of them back.

"You've never fought fair!" he growled. "Pick on someone your own size!"

He leaped at the second one, then planted his hind-legs firmly down and reared up to rain blows on the other. Smallfoot got to her paws and went for their legs. Riverstorm turned and saw Lilyheart struggling against a ginger-she cat who had pinned her to the ground.

Riverstorm leaped in to help, and bowled the cat over. She turned, and Riverstorm recognized the face of Sundance. Usually she looked kind, but now her teeth were bared, her claws were unsheathed,

and her eyes were sparking with anger.

"SilverClan stole my daughter!" Sundance yowled, fighting him and Lilyheart at the same time, sending furious blows that Riverstorm dodged effortlessly.

"No, we didn't!" Lilyheart hissed, finally pinning the leader down with a paw to the neck. "She came on her own!"

Sundance snorted. In her anger she easily threw Lilyheart off, and the calico she-cat was flung into the bushes. Riverstorm was left on his own.

"We didn't steal her," Riverstorm began, backing away. "She's my mate now, she came because she loved me!"

The ginger leader prowled after him. "No daughter of mine would go after a *SilverClan* tom!" she said it as if it was disgusting. Riverstorm flinched as she bared her teeth, but still stood his ground.

"Stormheart did," he insisted. "I swear."

Both cats stood still for a split second. Sundance faltered. "Are you sure?" she whispered, her claws sliding back in.

Riverstorm met her gaze. "Positive," he mewed.

Sundance straightened up and took a deep breath. "MarbleClan, retreat!" she yowled, and took off running. Riverstorm stood still as pelts swooped past. He found another GoldenClan cat easily, but now they were outnumbered. He sent the cat running with a few well aimed blows and turned to find another cat to fight. Suddenly, the cats hushed and stopped fighting. They parted, and Riverstorm saw Ashstar and Rootleap. The GoldenClan leader had Ashstar pinned and twitching feebly.

Then she stopped moving all together. Rootleap let out a yowl of victory and made to strike the killing blow, but Ashstar pushed off with surprising strength, bucked him off, and landed on him in the same move. Rootleap fell hard, and Ashstar looked around, her claws at his throat.

"SilverClan has won!" she yowled. "Rootleap, go back to your camp. This war is over!" She released him, sprang off, and gathered SilverClan to her.

"Good job, SilverClan!" she purred, then they all went back to camp.

As soon as the camp came into Riverstorm's sight view, he hared away from the rest of the cats, and sped into the nursery.

"Are you okay?" he asked Stormheart.

Stormheart purred. "I'm perfectly fine. How was the battle?"

"Ashstar ended the war and declared herself the winner!"

Stormheart stood up. "You're hurt!" she exclaimed, running her tail tip down his flank, where there was a long scratch.

Riverstorm dismissed it with a twitch of his ears. "I'll get that treated later, it doesn't hurt much, and other cats need herbs more."

Stormheart looked worried. "Okay...." she mewed.

Ashstar's P.O.V

Silver light wreathed around Ashstar and she heard Silverblaze's voice.

The sun and moon will work together for the worst in times of trouble.

Smoke will heal, it will know things you don't.

Holly will protect the ones you care about most.

United, they will help you when you're lost.

many sunrises later

Riverstorm sniffed the air, his ears pricked. He picked up the scent of a squirrel and stealthily crept up to it, making sure the wind was blowing in the right direction. He was soon close enough to leap, so

he brought his paws together, crouching for a spring.

Crack!

He had stepped on a dry stick, and it broke cleanly in half. The squirrel bolted for the nearest tree, which was a tail length away. Riverstorm let out a hiss of annoyance, and making up his mind, ran after it. He pulled himself onto the first branch, and saw the squirrel leaping from the tree he was in, to the neighboring one. Riverstorm gave up and slithered down the tree to the ground. Soon he had caught a rabbit to make up for the squirrel, and tracked down a mouse as well. Riverstorm carried his prey back to camp, feeling incredibly proud of himself. He deposited the rabbit and mouse on the fresh kill pile and went into the nursery.

"Hi, Stormheart," he greeted the black she-cat.

Stormheart looked up at him warmly. "Hello, Riversto-" Her words were cut off as she yowled.

"What's wrong?" Riverstorm mewed in alarm, frozen with shock.

Stormheart's breaths came hard and fast and she curled around her belly. She yowled again. Riverstorm raced out and into the medicine den.

"Willownose! Goldenstripe!" he panted. "Come quick! I think Stormheart is having her kits!"

Willownose looked up, startled. Then she quickly grabbed some herbs and hurried out of the den, Goldenstripe padding quickly behind her. Riverstorm walked after the she-cats quickly, and after asking if there was anything he could do to help, started pacing up and down the length of the clearing. He couldn't help but purr as Ashstar's kits, one month old, came tumbling out of her den, and started running around camp. Emeraldkit was sniffing the air, Blazekit was wrestling with his sister, Mistykit, and Maplekit was exploring the apprentices' den.

He resumed pacing as a screech came from the nursery. Bristlelight came up to him.

"Is Stormheart kitting?"

Riverstorm gave a tense nod.

"When did she start?"

"A little while ago," Riverstorm replied shakily, and kept on pacing with long, agitated breaths.

It was already after sunhigh when the yowls ended. Riverstorm pricked his ears hopefully as Willownose came out of the den and spoke to Ashstar.

"Willownose, are Stormheart and the kits okay?" the tabby leader asked.

Willownose's eyes were bleak. "Stormheart is in the paws of StarClan now." she began, just loud enough that Riverstorm could hear. "One of the kits was born dead, and the remaining two are very weak. It is StarClan's decision if they should live or not."

Riverstorm's heart dropped. After a little while, he hurried forward.

"Willownose, can I see them?"

Willownose nodded. "You may."

He padded into the den to see Stormheart, breathing weakly, curled around two tiny kits. One of them was black-furred, and the other had a gray pelt.

"Stormheart?" he asked, his voice breaking.

She stirred, slowly.

"Riverstorm?" the black she-cat asked, eyelids fluttering.

Riverstorm dropped down beside her. "Are you okay?" he asked worriedly.

"I don't know, I was in StarClan for a little bit."

"You were?"

"Yes," Stormheart purred weakly. "But I'm back now, love."

Riverstorm purred back, embracing her tightly.

"Do you want to name these kits?" he asked, hope burning in his voice.

Stormheart smiled. "I want to name this one Blackkit," she mewed, pointing her tail to the black-furred kit.

Riverstorm tilted his head. "Wait, is it a female or a male?"

Stormheart's brows furrowed. "That's a good question- Willonose!" she called.

Willownose stuck her head in. "yes?"

"Are they males or females?"

"They're both females!" she purred, then drew back.

Riverstorm looked down at his kits. "So not Blackkit then," he mewed. "What about Hollykit?"

"That works," Stormheart purred.

Riverstorm studied the other kit.

"Maybe....Graykit?"

Stormheart shook her head. "No, I don't like Graykit. What about Silverkit, after Silverfang?" she asked, looking down at the little kit.

Riverstorm shook his head. "I'm not against honoring Silverfang, but I don't want that....how about Smokekit?" he suggested.

Stormheart agreed at last. They dozed off in the nest, feeling life couldn't be better. Riverstorm's heart nearly broke in half as he thought about his third kit.

"Wherever you are," he whispered. "I hope you know I love you."

Riverstorm was resting in the shade of some ferns as the sun set,

watching the kits play. Emeraldkit was racing Mistykit around the camp, and Maplekit and Blazekit were setting up a game of hide and seek.

"Emeraldkit! Mistykit!" Maplekit called. "Come play with us!"

The other two kits came over and Blazekit turned around to give the other kits time to hide.

"Go, go, go!" Mistykit squeaked as she raced away.

Maplekit found Riverstorm and gazed up at him.

"Can I hide here?" she asked, her hazel eyes twinkling.

Riverstorm purred and shifted over so that the little kit could wiggle through. Then he closed the gap to make sure no one would see her.

Soon enough, Blazekit came running up to Riverstorm, the other kits in tow.

"Have you seen Maplekit?" he asked.

"No, I haven't," Riverstorm purred, trying not to laugh.

Blazekit's eyes narrowed and he sniffed the air.

"Are you sure?" he drawled.

Riverstorm nodded.

"How come I smell her, then?"

Riverstorm turned his head.

"Maplekit, go! Looks like they found you!"

Maplekit made a break for it, dashing away from her littermates. Blazekit growled and chased after her. Mistykit streaked past him and pinned her sister down, purring.

Riverstrom purred as he got to his paws and ducked into the

nursery. There was Stormheart, and their two kits.

"Hi," they both purred at the same time.

Riverstorm settled down beside his mate.

"What's up?" he asked her.

"Hollykit and Smokekit opened their eyes!" Stormheart mewed. "Hollykit has green eyes, and Smokekit has amber eyes!"

Riverstorm smiled. "Well, that means that they're ready to come out of the den!"

Stormheart gazed down at the she-kits.

"I suppose you're right."

Just in time, the kits started to stir, and Hollykit stretched, knocking Smokekit over.

Stormheart helped her daughter get to her paws, then crouched to face them.

"Okay, listen up!"

Both she-kits looked at her attentively.

"Now that you both opened your eyes, you are allowed to come out of the den and explore the camp. Make sure you're on your best behavior, and stay together, okay? And stay near other cats, don't come out of camp!"

Smokekit nodded and Hollykit launched herself out of the nursery.

"Yay!" she called as her tail whipped around the corner.

Smokekit dipped her head and padded away from her parents.

Stormheart gazed after her daughters, regret in her eyes.

"Hey, hey," Riverstorm soothed. "They're going to be okay!"

Stormheart nodded and pulled herself together.

"Want to go on a walk?"

"Sure!"

They padded out of the camp, tails intertwined and pelts brushing. And although they didn't notice, a pair of amber eyes were watching them hatefully out of the shadows of some bushes, and the setting sun caught on some white and black fur.

Riverstorm walked along the forest with his mate, breathing in her warm scent and listening to the birdsong.

"It's nice, isn't it?" Stormheart mewed as she came to a halt. Riverstorm nodded. "SilverClan territory is so peaceful!"

Stormheart settled down, wrapping her fluffy tail around her black paws neatly.

Riverstorm touched muzzles with her, and they sat together, watching the sunset. Suddenly there was a rustle in the bushes behind them. Riverstorm whipped around, almost knocking his mate off her paws. Stormheart righted herself and sniffed the air.

"What was that?" she mewed, glancing around.

Riverstorm frowned. "Only SilverClan scent," he mewed.

Stormheart took a pace forward.

"Who's ther-" she began, but didnt get to finish her sentence as a black and white blur knocked her off her paws in a whirlwind of teeth and claws.

what will happen to Stormheart?! anyways hope you enjoyed this chapter

Chapter 12

Ashstar curled around her kits, purring as she listened to Maplekit's story of how they played hide and seek.

"And then, I asked Riverstorm if I could hide with him, and he said yes, and I hid in his fur! Then when Blazekit tried to find me, Riverstorm said he hadn't seen me! But then Blazekit knew I was there, and so he told me to run! But Mistykit caught me, she's so fast!" Maplekit squeaked, purring as she nestled into her mother's fur.

Mistykit gave a mew of embarrassment. "Thanks, Maplekit," she purred.

Ashstar gave a laugh. She looked around once another scent drifted into the den; Bearthorn had come in. The kits fought to get to him, squeaking with joy. Bearthorn gave a dramatic 'oof' and crumpled to the floor as the kits launched themselves at him.

"You got me, you got me," he said playfully as Blazekit swarmed on top of him.

Ashstar propped herself up. "Kits! Get off your father!" They paid no attention, and Emeraldkit started chanting "Badger ride! Badger ride!" the others joined in.

Bearthorn purred. "Fine, done, you can have a badger ride. Hop on, kits!"

he crouched down, allowing the kits to hang onto his back. Once every kit was hanging on, he lumbered out of the den, swaying dramatically.

Squealing with excitement, they wiggled into the clearing and mewed with joy as Bearthorn broke into a run.

Ashstar followed them out and settled herself in some ferns when

she realized Smokekit and Hollykit were playing by themselves. She glanced around, but Stormheart was nowhere to be seen. She approached the kits.

"Where are Stormheart and Riverstorm?" she asked them.

Smokekit stopped what she was doing and looked up at her Clan leader.

"I saw them go out of camp," she mewed, then pounced on Hollykit, tumbling over.

Hollykit purred, then her face turned serious. "They've been out for a long time now!" she squeaked. Ashstar's tail started to flick. She turned to the warriors' den.

"Cedarstripe!" she called briskly.

"I'll be right back, my loves," she added to Bearthorn and their kits.

Cedarstripe ducked out of the den and approached his leader.

"You called, Ashstar?" he mewed.

"Follow me," the leader mewed, and bounded off into the forest. Cedarstripe ran after her, tail twitching slightly. She ran deeper into the wood, then paused and sniffed the air.

"What do you smell, Cedarstripe?" she asked, still sniffing.

"There's Stormheart...and Riverstorm....I think Blossomfur was here too, but that's stale.....oh, and Moonlight!"

Ashstar turned abruptly. "follow Moonlight's trail!" she ordered, and the two cats sped off after the black and white she-cat. As the scent trail got stronger, Ashstar could hear yelps of pain. They came to a halt in a clearing, and saw Stormheart laying on the ground, twitching feebly and blood trickling out of her injuries. Riverstorm stood over her on his hind paws, battling a black and white blur. Ashstar gave a yowl of fury and hurled herself at Moonlight. Cedarstripe hared away, back the way they had come, but it was fine.

Seeing his leader jump into the fight, Riverstorm fought with renewed strength, and after a couple more minutes of furious blows, Ashstar crouched, panting, on top of Moonlight, who lay still. Riverstorm dropped down on all fours and rushed to Stormheart's side.

"Are you okay?" he asked, licking her ear.

Stormheart stirred slightly, her eyes shining with pain. Cedarstripe was back within moments. Ashstar gave a sigh of relief when she saw that Goldenstripe, Blossomfur and Pandaleaf were hurting behind him. Looking down at the she-cat under her paws, she waved her tail for Blossomfur.

"Take this piece of fox-dung back to camp, keep her in the prisoner's den. Let Willownose tend to her, we can figure out what to do next after Stormheart's well." Blossomfur nodded, and she and Pandaleaf dragged the black and white she-cat away. Ashstar, Cedarstripe, and Riverstorm watched anxiously as Goldenstripe started to examine Stormheart.

"I think she'll live," Goldenstripe meowed after a while, and Riverstorm let out his breath as if he had been holding it for a long time. Ashstar laid her tail on his shoulders, he was relaxed now.

Goldenstripe looked around.

"Who is going to carry Sto-"

"I will!" Riverstorm volunteered instantly.

Ashstar raised her tail. "Me too," she mewed with half a glance at Riverstorm.

Goldenstripe smiled. "Okay," she purred.

She then helped Stormheart get onto Riverstorm and Ashstar, and they set off through the forest, back to the camp.

Once they reached the medical den, Ashstar gently placed Stormheart into the the nest and Riverstorm went to look for their kits, after making sure his mate was okay. Ashstar started fuming

again as she remembered Moonlight, and stormed off into the prisoner's den.

"Why did you attack Stormheart?" she growled at the black and white she-cat.

Blossomfur, Bearthorn, Riverstorm and Stormheart (who was leaning on Riverstorm) also came in and sat down.

Moonlight turned away and didn't answer.

Ashstar lost her patience and leaped on Moonlight, claws unsheathed. Blossomfur hurried forward as Moonlight rolled under the leader's claws, and pulled the she-cats apart. Blossomfur gave her leader a warning glance and sat next to Moonlight.

"Why did you attack Stormheart?" she asked patiently.

Moonlight showed her teeth. "I don't want to explain anything to you, kittypet!" she hissed, amber eyes glinting balefully.

All the cats in the den froze.

Blossomfur advanced on Moonlight, her lips drawn back in a snarl. "What did you just call me?" she growled.

"Nothing, nothing," Moonlight purred, wrapping her tail neatly around her paws.

Blossomfur, gritting her teeth, sat down.

Stormheart got to her paws. "Why-"

Moonlight snarled. "You already know, idiotic half-Clan cat!"

Stormheart lunged at the she-cat, knocking her off her paws. Moonlight fought back like a cornered fox. Ashstar couldn't take it anymore, and she and Blossomfur both leaped into the fight. They took pleasure in inflicting many wounds, and once the short fight was over, Ashstar left Blossomfur pinning Moonlight down and called a meeting.

"All cats old enough to climb a tree, gather to hear my words!" she yowled, sitting down on the boulder. Cats flowed out of the dens like water, their eyes glinting in the dark. They gathered around her in a semi circle and settled down, their murmurs ceasing as she opened her mouth to speak.

"Blossomfur, bring her out!" she mewed. "Woodshadow, come to the front, don't worry, you're not in trouble."

The brown tom stepped out of the crowd and came to the front. Blossomfur and Bearthorn dragged Moonlight out of the prisoner's den by the scruff and to the center of the clearing.

Smallfoot broke free of the crowd, her hazel eyes shining with distress. "What are you doing with my sister! Leave her be!" she cried, and tried to reach Moonlight. Cedarstripe knocked her aside with a powerful thrust.

"Maybe you were on the plan with her! We can't take chances," he growled, shoving the smaller cat back into the crowd.

Ashstar turned to the other cats.

"Moonlight attacked Stormheart today. Stormheart is a queen, and a Clanmate! Her reasons are unknown, and I would like to hear them. Moonlight?" Ashstar turned to the she-cat in cold fury.

"I-I" stammered Moonlight. "I don't really want to tell."

Ashstar narrowed her eyes. "Well then, Moonlight. I hate to be a cold hearted cat but I think it's time you knew what happened to wrongdoers in my Clan." she hissed. Then she flicked her tail at Woodshadow, who was one of the best fighters in the Clan.

"GO," she directed, then sat back.

Moonlight paled as he approached her. "Go whe-"

Woodshadow sprang at Moonlight, knocking the smaller cat over. The brown tom pinned her down, gave her some scratches across the stomach and throat, then stepped back. Moonlight struggled to her paws and leaped at Woodshadow. Smirking, Woodshadow

jumped up into the air and crashed down on top of her. He looked up at his leader.

"Is that enough?"

Ashstar nodded. "More, Moonlight, or will you talk?

Moonlight nodded, panting and licking her wounds.

"It was a stupid reason, really," she said. "Just please, let me go!"

Ashstar snorted. "So you broke two warrior codes for a stupid reason?" she mocked.

Moonlight looked uncertain, glancing around. None of the other cats met her gaze, and a cat in the crowd yelled out: "Traitor!"

Ashstar flexed her claws. "You do realize how angry I am, right? I'm seething right now. I was having a great day, and then you showed me I have a traitor in my Clan. Thanks a lot," she mewed bitterly.

Moonlight looked slightly abashed, still staring at her paws. She didn't see Ashstar's flick of her tail, and glanced up too late. Woodshadow was already bearing down on her, his teeth bared in a snarl. Moonlight unsheathed her claws and leaped back as Woodshadow pounced. Ashstar leaned forward interestedly.

Woodshadow lashed out at Moonlight, who slid under his outstretched claws and swarmed onto his back. She raised a paw, ready to deliver the killing blow, when countless cats swarmed forward. Bearthorn aimed a blow at her legs and she crumpled, Whitestorm bit down on her shoulder, Lilyheart gave a scratch on the flank, and many more cats drove her off Woodshadow. Ashstar gave a thunderous yowl and the cats froze mid-blow. She leaped down from the rock and came up to Moonlight. She was covered in scratches and bruises and was bleeding freely.

"Willownose, take care of the traitor. We will monitor her behavior carefully."

The black she-cat hurried forward and started dragging the bleeding heap away to the medicine den.

Suddenly Ashstar halted. "Wait..." she mewed slowly. "I don't want to waste herbs this close to leaf-bare..."

Moonlight stared up in terror at her leader.

"...so she can just go to another Clan. You're banished."

Ashstar dismissed the black-and-white she cat with a flick of her tail and jumped off the boulder. She headed to her den to play with her kits. Out of the corner of her eye she saw Moonlight bow her head, mew something to Smallfoot, and pad away. Feathershine was staring after her daughter, embarrassment and disgust in her gaze.

Ashstar sighed and disappeared through the opening of the den.

Chapter 13 - The deptuty's sign

Riverstorm stared up at the sky, feeling quite chilly. The leaves had fallen off the trees, the days were shorter, and the nights seemed to drag on forever. It was getting harder and harder to catch prey. The patrols were out for a long time, but only managed to catch a few pieces of prey.

A gust of wind blew over the silvery blue tom. Shivering, Riverstorm fluffed out his fur, wondering how Stormheart was doing. He had gone out on a walk on his own at dusk, promising Blossomfur that he would look for prey, but so far he hadn't found any. Suddenly there was a rustling sound, so Riverstorm got to his paws noiselessly and looked around. There was a squirrel scurrying across the roots of a nearby tree!

You cannot mess this up! This is the best piece of prey that we've had for the past week! he told himself, creeping towards the creature.

The squirrel looked up and met his gaze as he stalked forward. It broke for the tree, it's tail bouncing after it.

Riverstorm gave an annoyed hiss and raced after it. He was quite fast, but the wind stung his eyes and he had to squint, and his paws faltered as the wind unsteadied him. He paused, watching as the squirrel prepared to jump into the tree, and Riverstorm gave a fantastic leap and landed on the tree. The squirrel had messed up. It already jumped, right into his paws. He gave it a pleased bite and lifted his tail.

Great job! Now you can feed your kits! he thought happily.

Riverstorm carried the prey back to camp, feeling proud and accomplished. When he ducked into the nursery, Stormheart looked up with a pleased purr.

"You got a squirrel!" she mewed, her eyes lighting up.

Riverstorm purred. "Hi, my loves," he mewed, gazing down at his daughters.

Smokekit met his gaze bashfully. "Hi, Papa!" she mewed.

Hollykit pounced on his tail excitedly. "Papa!" she squealed.

Riverstorm flicked his tail out of his kit's grip. "You just can't catch it, can you?" he purred.

Smokekit lashed her own tail. "Who says?" she challenged, fixing her gaze on Riverstorm's tail.

"I say!" Riverstorm mewed, flicking his tail out of reach again as Hollykit pounced. Frustrated, Hollykit exchanged a glance with her sister. They nodded simultaneously and both leaped. Not knowing where to flick his tail to, he feinted to the left, but Smokekit was there. He tugged it to the right, but Hollykit was already on top of it.

Riverstorm gave a dramatic sigh. "Oh, you got me!" he mewed.

Hollykit purred. Stormheart, who was watching proudly, fondled her.

"Riverstorm, how about that squirrel?" she asked, her belly rumbling. "Want to share?"

Riverstorm shook his head. "Please, Stormheart, share it with the other queens, kits, or elders. I'll have a mouse or something."

Stormheart gazed at him. "But-"

Riverstorm pushed the prey to her. "You need it more."

Stormheart purred. "Aw," she mewed. "Fine, but eat more than a mouse. Our best hunter can't starve!"

Riverstorm nuzzled her affectionately. "I'm not the best," he purred. "I'll go get something to eat."

He turned and padded out of the den, his belly rumbling loudly.

The fresh-kill pile was quite small, and so Riverstorm grabbed a vole and sat down by the tree stump. The sweet taste of the prey filled his mouth, and even though it was cold on the outside, the meat itself was warm and tender. He gulped it down in a few minutes, and stuck his head into the nursery. "Good night, my loves," he purred, then turned to the warriors' den. Riverstorm lay down, kicking Moonlight's old nest away from him. The other warriors were already laying down too, and he purred a "Good night," to Lightningheart and Pinetail, who were the closest to him. They dipped their heads to him, and soon Riverstorm was sleeping, snuggled close to the other warriors.

It seemed like he barely closed his eyes when Whitestorm was shaking him with a white paw.

"I'm up, I'm up," he groaned, rolling over.

Whitestorm gave him a stern glare. "Come on, Riverstorm, it's your turn to guard. Dawnstripe too."

Dawnstripe blinked open her yellow eyes and got to her paws sleepily as her name was said. Riverstorm sank into a quick stretch and padded out of the den.

The night was chilly and clear, and Riverstorm could see thousands of stars dotting the sky.

"Hello, StarClan," he murmured softly, leaping onto a boulder to take watch.

There was a soft thud and Dawnstripe leaped up on another and sat down, pointing her muzzle to the sky. Riverstorm guessed she was looking for her mother, who had joined StarClan before Riverstorm was born. Sure enough, she was. Riverstorm pricked his ears in time to hear her words.

"Ruffledfur, if you can hear me, I hope you are safe in StarClan."

Riverstorm looked out over the forest, his ears pricked and eyes wide scanning the landscape for danger. As they sat, watching, the sun rose, and dawn turned the corner.

The light lit up Dawnstripe as she sat, silhouetted, her ears pricked. Riverstorm turned his head and watched the river glittering. As the sunlight hit it, it seemed to shine and weave, like silk.

Once the sun was a good measure in the sky, Dawnstripe flicked her tail.

"It's time for the dawn patrol," she mewed.

Riverstorm nodded. "I'll round up some cats," he mewed.

He jumped down lightly from his boulder and padded into the den.

"Leafshadow! Honeystripe! Breezefang! Come on, dawn patrol," he mewed. "Lightningheart and Brackenfur, you're on watch until camp wakes up."

The cats he had named stirred, Honeystripe stretched and opened her amber eyes. Breezefang rolled over, exposing his white underbelly and splotches. Leafshadow got to her paws at once and stood alert. They came out of the den after Riverstorm. Lightningheart took Riverstorm's spot on the rock, while Brackenfur padded across the clearing to the other watch. The cats he had asked on a patrol followed him to the entrance to the camp, where Dawnstripe was waiting.

Silently they padded out of camp, and Riverstorm flexed his claws into the wet grass. The birds had started up their singing, and the sunlight was filtering through the trees. Even though the sun was giving off a lot of light, Riverstorm was still cold. He fluffed out his fur as much as he could, but the chilly air still penetrated his skin. Riverstorm fell back beside Leafshadow as they walked to the border.

"Hi, Leafshadow," he mewed.

Leafshadow turned her head to look at him. "Hey, Riverstorm."

"What's up?" Riverstorm purred. "Are you as cold as I am?"

Leafshadow purred, throwing her head back. "I'm good. And yes, I am freezing!"

Riverstorm halted for a moment. "I can't wait for winter to be over!"

They had come to the border. Dawnstripe waved her tail and the patrol split accordingly. Riverstorm and Breezefang walked left along the stream, stopping every now and then to mark a tree or rock and sniff the air.

The patrol regrouped again after. "Nothing's stirring out there," Breezefang reported.

Riverstorm and Brackenfur nodded in agreement.

Dawnstripe flicked her tail. "We ought to catch something before we come back, the queens will be hungry when they wake."

Dawnstripe went with Breezefang and Leafshadow this time, and Brackenfur came with Riverstorm for a hunt.

Riverstorm signaled to Brackenfur as soon as he sniffed the air; there was a rabbit scent, and it was fresh. Brackenfur's ears pricked and he stalked in a large circle around the prey. It was a bigger circle than SIlverClan warriors usually did, because in the leaf-bare, cats couldn't afford to scare off prey, especially a big animal like a rabbit. Once he was in position, Riverstorm crept carefully and quietly towards the rabbit. Everytime it lifted it's head from the stems it was chewing, he stopped and barely dared to breathe, let alone move. He resisted crouching and leaping when he was in range, this prey was too important. So Riverstorm crept as close as he could, mindful of Brackenfur doing the same on the other side. Then he sprang, claws unsheathed and teeth bared. The rabbit streaked away, right towards Brackenfur, who calmly intercepted it with a clean blow. Once he put it down, Riverstorm dipped his head.

"Wow, that was cool!" he mewed. With a start he remembered that Brackenfur was just as old as Ashstar, because they were littermates. So they must have been hunting for so long that they could do it quite calmly.

Brackenfur looked pleased. "Thanks, Riverstorm. Let's hunt on, or meet up with the others?" he purred.

"I think we can each catch a bird or mouse or two," Riverstorm suggested.

"Okay," Brackenfur agreed. They split up, and in a few minutes regrouped in the same spot, waiting for the rest of the cats. Brackenfur dropped his vole, Riverstorm licked his chest as Brackenfur praised him on his sparrow. They stood over their prey, waiting. Leafshadow pushed into the clearing first, carrying nothing. Dawnstripe had a thrush, but Breezefang also did not make a catch. Riverstorm picked up the rabbit, pushed the sparrow to Leafshadow to carry, and Brackenfur took the vole.

"Great work," Breezefang praised them. He led the way back to camp, and once they deposited the prey on the pile, it seemed significantly larger. By the time Riverstorm lay down to groom his fur, the other cats were waking up. Once there were only a few in the dens, Ashstar bounded out of hers and made a flying leap to the main boulder.

"All cats old enough to climb a tree gather for a Clan meeting!" she yowled, and sat down. Riverstorm padded closer and settled in as the other cats gathered around.

"It has come to my attention that some kits are old enough to become apprentices!" she mewed, purring loudly.

"What!" Emberkit squeaked.

"Us?!" his sister, Maplekit mewed in disbelief.

Ashstar gave a laugh as she gazed down at her kits.

"Even though I would rather keep them forever, close to me,-"

"No way," Mistykit said crossly. "I want to be an apprentice now!"

Ashstar's eyes twinkled. "You have to pass a assessment to become a apprentice."

"Wait, what?" Blazekit mewed. "What do we have to do?"

"You have to learn to fly."

The gathered cats gave *mrrows* of laughter.

Mistykit dug her claws into the ground. "You're lying!" she mewed fiercely.

"Yes, I am," Ashstar purred. "Mistykit, come up."

Mistykit bounded to her mother and gazed up at her.

"From this moment on, my kit will be known as Mistypaw. Lightningheart, you have received excellent training from Tigertooth, and I'm sure you will pass on the skills to Mistypaw."

Mistypaw gave a skip of delight and touched noses with Riverstorm's brother. Riverstorm's heart skipped a beat as Ashstar's gaze met his.

Am I going to be a mentor? A mentor to the leader's kits? he thought eagerly.

"Maplekit, come up!"

Maplekit jumped up to her mother, eyes shining.

"From now on, you'll be known as Maplepaw. Riverstorm, you have received great training from Leafshadow, and so I expect you to pass your knowledge to young Maplepaw."

Yes! I'm a mentor! Woo hoo!

Maplepaw padded over to him pridefully.

"I'll do my best!" she whispered.

Riverstorm purred. "I'll make you the best warrior you can be!"

She touched noses with him and stood by his side as Ashstar called Emeraldkit to her.

"..be known as Emberpaw. Petalfur, you will teach Emberpaw your ways."

Emberpaw bounced to his mentor and almost knocked her over in

his eagerness.

"Blazekit, you will now be known as Blazepaw, and Smallfoot, you've had an excellent mentor in Brightclaw, and you will pass on your skills to Blazepaw."

Blazepaw padded over to Smallfoot, dignified, and touched noses with her.

Just before everyone dispersed, Ashstar kept going.

"Blossomfur wishes to retire to the elders' den."

Silence greeted her words.

Riverstorm stared in shock as Blossomfur padded forward, grey hairs quite visible on her muzzle and chest. Her blue eyes shone as she looked up at the leader she had been serving for moons.

Ashstar purred as she touched noses with her deputy.

"Blossomfur, you have served your Clan long and well, and the elders are pleased to have you join them."

Windstorm nodded. "You've got that right!" he rumbled.

Blossomfur looked pleased and she dipped her head.

"Thank you, StarClan, for letting me live this long. Many cats have not gotten that chance."

SilverClan dipped their heads as one. Blossomfur stepped back and moved closer to the elders, her eyes fixed on Ashstar as the tabby leader continued.

Ashstar swept a look around her cats."I have not picked a deputy yet, and I would like StarClan to send me a sign, because it is harder the ever to pick-"

Her gaze locked on the river. Riverstorm felt a prickle of anticipation in his fur an he turned to see what she was looking at, and gasped. He was not the only one who did.

Heavy clouds had drifted over the river, and it had started to rain heavily. There was no rain in the camp however - SilverClan stayed dry. The wind picked up, Riverstorm could hear it, but could not feel it, for it was only by the river.

Ashstar's eyes narrowed, and she jumped down from the boulder to take a closer look.

"StarClan has decided!" she announced, her gaze sweeping the cats again.

As soon as the final word was out of her mouth, the clouds started to clear, drifting away through the sky. The sun began to shine a little brighter, and the wind stopped.

Ashstar met Riverstorm's gaze again, and his heart beat faster.

"Riverstorm is the new deputy of SilverClan."

Riverstorm froze.

"Me?" he asked disbelievingly. trembling slightly.

Ashstar purred. "Yes, you. StarClan has made their decision. Riverstorm! Do you accept?"

Maplepaw nudged him anxiously. "Go on, accept! I want to be the deputy's apprentice!" she whispered.

"I accept, Ashstar," Riverstorm mewed warmly, gazing down at his apprentice.

Ashstar purred and weaved through the crowd to touch noses with him.

"Well then, you can make some patrols, and then take out your apprentices," she suggested, then added, "and I want to stretch my legs, so add me on a patrol too."

Feeling kinda overwhelmed, Riverstorm nodded.

"Okay, let's see...Lilyheart, you can lead a hunting patrol, take

Ashstar and a few more cats, uhm, Sandwhisker, you can lead another one, take Whitestorm, Lemonheart, Rabbitclaw, and Hawkfeather, Cloudpelt, you can lead a third, take Birchclaw, Earthheart, Tigertooth, and Mousetail. Then...right, border patrols, Lighthunder, you can take one to the MarbleClan border, take Mudclaw, Pebbleshine, Cloudbranch, and Skybright. Shadowfoot, take a patrol to the regular border, pick whoever you want, and I'll take a border patrol to the GoldenClan border, Maplepaw, Lightningheart, Petalfur, Blazepaw, Emeraldpaw, Smallfoot, and Mistypaw, you're coming with me."

He waved his tail, and motioned for his patrol. "I'll be right back, okay? I just need to talk to Stormheart."

Maplepaw nodded once, ran to her littermates, and started talking to them.

Riverstorm ducked into the nursery.

"Hi, my loves," he greeted his three she-cats.

Stormheart looked up at him, pride and love shining in her gaze.

"So you're the new deputy, huh?" she purred.

"I am, love, but I'm in a rush, I just wanted to say hi to my mate, and then I have to go on patrol," he purred back.

"Okay," Stormheart mewed. "Have fun, and bring me back something tasty."

Half-way out of the den, Riverstorm looked back. "It's a border patrol, not a hunting patrol!" he reminded her.

"Oh, okay. Make sure you're safe then!" Stormheart lay back down, nestled alongside her kits.

"I will!" With that, Riverstorm turned and headed to his patrol.

They padded out into the forest and to the border silently.

"Okay," he mewed once they reached it. "Smallfoot, Blazepaw

Maplepaw and I will go to the left, and the rest of you will go to the right. We can meet in the hunting clearing after." The cats nodded and they split up. Smallfoot demonstrated how to mark a tree, and Riverstorm lifted his leg and sprayed a large rock on their border.

"Come on, apprentices, now you try!" he said, coming back down.

Maplepaw trotted closer to the border, lifted her leg, and promptly toppled over. Blazepaw managed to mark a little before stumbling and bringing his leg back down.

They practiced until both apprentices could balance, and Riverstorm had them do one more go.

"Come on, Maplepaw, last try!" he mewed enthusiastically.

Maplepaw trotted up, lifted her leg, and gracefully sprayed the rock with her scent.

Smallfoot turned to Blazepaw. "Now you."

He stayed up shorter than his sister, but still managed to spray a tree with scent.

"Great job, apprentices," Riverstorm mewed warmly.

Both apprentinces blushed and ducked their heads, and Riverstorm took the lead as they padded to the hunting clearing.

When they emerged into the meadow, they saw Mistypaw and Emberpaw lounging in the sun. Petalfur and Lightningheart were conversing about something behind them.

Riverstorm stormed over to them.

"Lightningheart!" he scolded his brother. "What are you doing?"

Lightningheart jumped. "Sorry, Riverstorm," he mewed, glancing guiltily around.

"Look, I get you want a mate too, but you have to put your Clan first!" Riverstorm said angrily.

Petalfur blushed and stepped back at the blue-furred deputy's words.

Lightningheart was silent for a moment. "What about you, then, sneaking off to MarbleClan and mating with a cat from that Clan?" he flared up.

Riverstorm stood his ground. "Look where that's gotten me! Deputy of SilverClan, and proud father of two kits!"

Lightningheart looked away. "Fine! It won't happen again."

Riverstorm dipped his head. "Make sure it doesn't."

Maplepaw looked relieved that her mentor had stopped arguing, and eagerly listened in as Riverstorm announced what they were doing.

Riverstorm led the hunting practice, and was very proud of Mistypaw, who was a natural hunter, and used her speed to catch a vole. Maplepaw was not as good at hunting, and kept pouncing wrong, but Riverstorm was not worried. It was normal that some apprentices did not do exemplary on their first day.

Nevertheless, Riverstorm praised his apprentice. "Great job, Maplepaw," he mewed, curling his tail over his paws as he watched her.

Maplepaw sat up, blowing a leaf off her nose. "I'm cold and tired!" she complained, shaking out her fur. "Let's go back to camp!"

Riverstorm, who had his fur fluffed up, shook his head. "Before we go to camp we have to catch something for the Clan."

Maplepaw gave him an annoyed look and flounced away, trying to find something. Riverstorm followed her, and after a while, a mouse darted towards him from the direction Maplepaw went. A moment later Maplepaw hurled herself after it. Riverstorm sighed and, raising his paw, gave the killing blow.

Riverstorm brushed himself off. "Alright, Maplepaw. We work well as a team. Now, we can go home."

Maplepaw purred, and, tensing her muscles, ran up the tree to the first branch, pushed off, and landed on the ground.

"Come on, Maplepaw," Riverpaw purred.

Chapter 14

Stormheart looked longingly at the nursery opening, then back down at her kits, snuggled close to her belly. Smokekit had rolled away a little, and Stormheart nudged her daughter back in.

I wish I could go out, maybe hunt a little, or run through the forest! But after what happened to Moonlight...I don't want to put Riverstorm through such stress! she thought.

Thinking about her mate made Stormheart feel warm inside. Just today, he became SilverClan's deputy! She was so proud of him! Riverstorm was the kindest, selfless, and bravest cat in the entire Clan!

Stormheart remembered, when she was a young cat, just became a warrior, and was patrolling the border. She had smelled a fox and went to check it out. She had climbed a tree, not a moment too soon, because there was the vixen, sniffing around the roots of the tree that Stormheart was in. Then there was a small whimper, and the fox turned around to see a small, blue-furred tom, an apprentice. Stormheart could not help but admit that he was handsome, and she had looked on interestedly to see what would happen. The fox had started to creep forward when Stormheart realized that the apprentice was in danger, so she slid down off the tree, and crept closer. The vixen had readied itself for a pounce, and when it leaped, Stormheart had met it in midair. She had slammed it back from the blue-furred cat, and ducked under the vixen's teeth, clawing at its belly. The thing she had most admired, was that even though Riverstorm - no, he was Riverpaw then - was terrified, he still came forward to help fight the fox. Stormheart purred to herself quietly, thinking about his amazed expression when he saw her fighting. She was jerked out of her memories when she saw Riverstorm and Maplepaw appear in the opening of the den. Stormheart's mate seemed to be talking with his apprentice.

"You should practice stalking, Maplepaw. You'll be a great warrior

in no time if you practice!"

Stormheart saw her nod, the blue-furred tom laid his tail on her shoulders, then dismissed her.

He ducked into the den and his eyes lit up, whenever he saw her and the kits. It made Stormheart feel slightly self-conscious, but she never loved him less because of it.

"Hi, my love," they purred at the same time.

Riverstorm crossed the nursery to her in one bound and nuzzled her, intertwining his tail with hers.

"How was your day?" Stormheart asked, shifting Hollykit closer to her with her tail. The black kit wiggled and looked up, listening into their conversation.

"Maplepaw isn't that good at hunting," Riverstorm sighed. "She had many chances, but she blew every one but the last one, which was pure luck."

Stormheart nodded sympathetically. "You should tell her to practice, and be more aware of what's going on around her."

"My, my," Riverstorm purred. "You seem to know what you're doing!"

Stormheart dipped her head. "I do! And guess what!" she mewed, twitching slightly.

Riverstorm looked amused. "You're going to be the leader?"

"No, no," Stormheart purred, cuffing him around the ear with her paw. "Ashstar came by earlier, and she said tomorrow Hollykit and Smokekit are going to become apprentices!"

Smokekit, who was looking on, slightly wary, gave a squeal of excitement and leaped up into the air.

Hollykit waved her tail excitedly. "My warrior name is going to be Hollynight!" she squeaked excitedly. "I'm going to be doing

ambushes on everyone!"

Smokekit purred, her tail waving madly. "You're not going to be Hollynight! You'll probably be Hollybush!" she paused, thinking about something. "And my name is going to be.....umm....Sparkledawn!"

Stormheart purred, drawing her kits closer to her for the third time. "You'll be great warriors!" she mewed.

Smokekit wiggled away from her mother's paws. "And queens!" she reminded her sternly.

Stormheart nodded. "You'll be a wonderful queen, Smokekit. Anyway, kits, it's time you went to bed. Tomorrow you'll wake up fresh and you'll be apprentices!"

Smokekit touched noses with her father, while Hollykit jumped into her nest.

"Goodnight, Papa," the little blue-furred kit said.

"Goodnight, sweetie," Riverstorm answered, giving her a comforting lick.

Stormheart touched her muzzle to Riverstorm's, and then drew back. "See you tomorrow, my love," she purred.

Riverstorm's eyes sparkled. "Goodnight, Stormheart. I love you,"

"I love you more," Stormheart mewed. Riverstorm purred and left the den. Stormheart turned to her kits. Hollykit had gone from fake sleeping to actual sleeping, and Smokekit was gazing out of the den. At her mother's rustle she padded into the nest next to Hollykit and lay down, curling her tail over her nose.

This is the last night you have with them so close to you. Make it count, Stormheart! she thought to herself. And so she curled even closer to them than usual, and fell asleep to the sound of their breathing.

Stormheart woke, and just lay there. Then joyful and regretful emotions surged up inside of her and she blinked, remembering her

kits' apprentice ceremony.

But still, Stormheart felt pride blazing in her chest.

Looking down, she saw that her kits were stirring, aroused by her movement. Once they were awake, she whispered to them, "You can go out and play until pre-sun high. Then I have to groom you and get you ready for the ceremony.

"We're going to be apprentices!" Hollykit squealed joyfully.

She launched herself out of the nursery, Smokekit following her more carefully.

Stormheart got up and began to groom herself. *Was this how Sundance felt when she was giving up me and Skyjump to be apprentices? I don't envy it....* then she had a pang of sorrow for her brother. They were inseparable as kits, then apprentices, then warriors. Eventually Skyjump moved on and took a mate, a beautiful silver and white she-cat named Ivypool.

She was snooty and never gave Stormheart and Skyjump a chance to talk to each other. Leaving him with her was one of the hardest things she had ever done when she decided she would switch Clans.

Stormheart finished her wash and straightened up. Padding out of the nursery, she shook out her fur and sank into a deep stretch, yawning. She curled her claws in and out of the cold grass and fluffed out her fur. It was chilly, and Stormheart contemplated bringing her kits back inside. Then she thought better of it, for they would be out for their apprentice duties. The black she-cat wondered who their mentors would be. She dismissed the thought - that was up to Ashstar.

She settled into some ferns, shivering. The wind picked up and she huddled closer to the ground, watching her kits play. It had gotten warmer when the sun started it's trek into the sky. Stormheart watched as the other SilverClan warriors got up and began to do daily tasks around the camp. Stormheart called her kits into the nursery, and started to lick their fur neatly. Hollykit wriggled away from her mother's tongue. Stormheart paused in her licking. "Come

on, Hollykit, you have to get ready. You can't become an apprentice looking like you've been pulled through thorns backwards!"

Hollykit gave a loud groan and let Stormheart finish grooming her. The black kit, at a word from her mother, then sat at the wall of the nursery neatly while Stormheart turned to Smokekit. Smokekit did not wiggle, but waited patiently as Stormheart used her tongue to smooth down the fur.

Just as Stormheart was finishing, she heard a loud, clear yowl float through the camp.

"All cats old enough to climb a tree gather for a Clan meeting!"

Smokekit squealed. "Ashstar called! Let's go!"

Stormheart restrained her daughter. "Not yet, I'll tell you when. Your father will come get you when it's time."

They stayed in the den, listening to the rustling of the cats. Then Riverstorm thrust his head in, his blue eyes twinkling.

"Come on, kits," he whispered. "Everyone is waiting for you!"

Hollykit puffed out her chest and padded after her father. Smokekit followed her sister out and Stormheart, with a final glance at the nursery, ducked out as well. She took a spot in the crowd near the front and joyfully watched as her kits paused in front of the boulder. Ashstar jumped down, landing lightly on the grass.

"Hollykit, you have reached the age of six months, and therefore, you are ready to become an apprentice. You will now be known as Hollypaw. Whitestorm, you have had a couple of apprentices, and you have taught them very well. Please train Hollypaw the same way, and I hope she will become a great warrior in your paws."

Hollypaw gave a skip of delight and bounced over to the older white tom, and clumsily touched noses with him. She stood by him and watched as Smokekit padded daintily to Ashstar and looked up at the tabby leader, complete trust in her gaze.

"Smokekit." Ashstar's mew was warm. "You have also reached six

months of age, and it is time for you to begin your training. You will now be known as Smokepaw, and Pebbleshine, you are young, but I think you are ready for a apprentice. You will train Smokepaw all you know and help her get to a warrior."

Smokepaw padded dutifully to Pebbleshine, touched noses with her, and stood at her side as the Clan yowled, "Hollypaw! Smokepaw! Hollypaw! Smokepaw!"

Smokepaw bounced over to Stormheart, with Hollypaw hurrying behind her.

"I am so proud of you, my kits." Stormheart purred. "Congratulations!"

Hollypaw opened her mouth but closed it again as Ashstar let out a thunderous yowl.

"I have also decided who is going to the Gathering!"

Murmurings of anticipation and excitement rippled through the cats and they waited eagerly for her to speak.

"Riverstorm, Goldenstripe, Willownose, Dawnstripe, Whitestorm, Hollypaw, Honeystripe, Tigertooth, Woodshadow, Lilyheart, Bearthorn, Pebbleshine, Lightningheart, Smallfoot, Petalfur, Mudfur, Smokepaw, Emberpaw, Mistypaw, Maplepaw, Blazepaw, Lion, and Windflight. We leave in a few minutes, get ready!"

The cats that were chosen buzzed excitedly, while the ones who weren't seemed disappointed. Stormheart knew she had to face her mother sometime, she had to come to this Gathering.

"Ashstar? Um, excuse me? Ashstar?"

The grey tabby turned around. "What is it, Stormheart?" she mewed.

"Is it okay if I go to the Gathering too?"

Ashstar considered this. "Well, okay," she mewed. "Be careful around MarbleClan though."

"I will," the black she-cat mewed gratefully. Stormheart turned tail and padded to her kits. "Guess who's going to the Gathering with you?" she asked them.

"Oh, Mama, you're going too?" Smokepaw squealed. She lashed her tail. "Yay! We're all going! I'm gonna go find Riverstorm!" The gray cat took off, weaving through the camp.

Tell me what you think, and make sure you point out any spelling errors that i've missed!

- Silver

Chapter 15 - who are you?

Ashstar placed Riverstorm's tail on Goldenstripe's shoulder, and moved down the line, making sure every cat was touching, tail to shoulder. The long line of cats stretched across the camp, and the cats that weren't going were helping their Clanmates get into formation.

"Is everyone ready?" Ashstar yowled, taking her place at the head of the line.

"Yes!" SilverClan choroused, their fur spiking up slightly in anticipation.

"Okay. Three, two, one!"

Ashstar squeezed her eyes shut and turned into a beam of sliver light. She spun out of control, and she felt her tail still glued to Riverstorm's shoulder, and then the spinning stopped. SilverClan collapsed onto the ground, and picked themselves up, shaking out their fur. Hollypaw and Smokepaw just looked astonished as they soothed their rumpled pelts.

They had arrived at the Gathering place. Ashstar loped down into the clearing eagerly, and they saw GoldenClan appear from the trees, bathed in golden light, leap down, and race down to the clearing from the other side. In a flash of white light MarbleClan spilled into the clearing as well, and the leaders climbed up into the great tree and took their places on the branches.

"I'll start," Rootleap mewed. "GoldenClan is doing okay so far this winter, we have been preparing for the snow by storing prey and upgrading dens. We have one new warrior, Shadepool."

The Clans ruffled their fur and yowled. "Shadepool! Shadepool! Shadepool!"

Ashstar stepped forward on her branch, claws out to grip it and tail erect. She faced the cats boldly and opened her mouth to speak.

"SilverClan is also thriving. My previous deputy, Blossomfur, has retired to the elders' den, and so my new deputy is Riverstorm."

"Riverstorm! Riverstorm! Riverstorm!" The clans yowled, and Ashstar's deputy ducked his head.

"That is not all," Ashstar mewed as Sundance stepped forward. "We have six new apprentices, Emberpaw, Mistypaw, Maplepaw, and Blazepaw, who are my own kits, and Smokepaw and Hollypaw."

"Emberpaw! Mistypaw! Maplepaw! Blazepaw! Smokepaw! Hollypaw!"

The apprentices looked at each other, eyes shining with pride.

"Sundance, you may go ahead." Ashstar turned on her branch, padded carefully to the trunk, and sat down, listening to the ginger she-cat.

"MarbleClan is doing quite well. We have had two litters of kits, and two new warriors. Today, we welcome Cloudsplash and Darkfoot to our ranks."

There was a few gasps that MarbleClan had two litters of kits this close to leaf-bare, but still, shouts of "Cloudsplash! Darkfoot!"rang out. Ashstar jumped down from her branch. It was time to interact and share stories with each other.

As the Clans mingled, however, she heard paws, many paws, crunching on the leaves.

"Cats of all Clans!" Ashstar yowled above the hubbub of the cats. "I think there are cats approaching! Into the undergrowth!"

The cats divided back into their original Clans, they heard a scuffle and all hid in the undergrowth. Ashstar, Rootleap, and Sundance drew themselves up and faced the sound bravely, waiting for the loud, rustling creature to show itself.

A russet tom pushed out of the undergrowth. Two white cats followed him, both males, one with one black foot, and a spotted ginger she-cat padded after them.

"Who are you?" Rootleap growled. "Why are you here?"

The russet tom faced him coldly. "My name is Firestar, leader of ThunderClan. The white tom with one black foot stepped forward. "My name is Blackstar, leader of ShadowClan."

The other white tom also came forward. "I am Onestar, leader of WindClan."

The orange-furred she-cat hissed at them. "Leopardstar, leader of RiverClan!"

Silence greeted these words.

Four. More. New. Strange. Clans. Ashstar thought in horror.

Then Sundance stepped forward suspiciously. "Where are your Clans, then?" she hissed.

"ThunderClan! ShadowClan! WindClan! RiverClan!" the russet tom, Firestar yowled, raking the three leaders with his green stare.

Many, many cats rustled and came out of the undergrowth. At least thirty cats more than all of the cats in the original Clans.

"Oh," Ashstar whispered. "Well, what do you want?" she asked the leaders.

"We need a territory!" Firestar growled. "Twolegs cut down our trees and drove us out of the forest, and we are too tired to go much farther.

"Well, what are we supposed to do about it?" Rootleap hissed, his fur bristling. "Sounds like a you problem, not a me problem.

"We will fight for it if you don't want to do it peacefully!" Blackstar rumbled, unsheathing his claws.

"No, that won't work. First, you are trespassing on our sacred Gathering Place, and second, we came here first. Go find another territory." Sundance mewed, her fur bristling along her spine.

Leopardstar furrowed her eyebrows. "Wait, you're a Clan too?"

"Three Clans," Ashstar growled. "I am Ashstar, leader of SilverClan."

"Rootleap, leader of GoldenClan."

"Sundance, leader of MarbleClan."

Onestar contemplated this. "Well, why don't you join our league?"

Ashstar flicked her tail, annoyed. "Your league? Your league? Who do you think you are?" she growled.

"We came here first!" Rootleap exclaimed. "If anything, you should be joining our league!"

Blackstar flattened his ears. "Can we at least pass through your territories to find our own?" he rumbled.

"Yeah!" Onestar backed him up. "And where are your Clans?"

As on cue, SilverClan padded out of the undergrowth, followed by GoldenClan and MarbleClan.

Each group of Clans glared at each other. A sandy ginger she-cat yowled, "Go away!"

Firestar turned his head, raking her with his green gaze. "Sandstorm, be quiet! Just because you're my mate, doesn't mean you get special treatment in front of all these Clans!"

Sandstorm ducked her head, embarrassed.

Blackstar stared at Ashstar. "Well, can we go?" he asked pointedly.

Sundance sighed. "Clans, move aside," she mewed, waving her tail.

Ashstar moved to the edge of the island as Riverstorm herded SilverClan to the side.

"Thank you," Leopardstar mewed. "Can we at least be close enough to be in the same league?"

"I shall consider that," Rootleap mewed, speaking for Ashstar and Sundance. "I will meet you all here with my deputy, as will you. See you in three days."

Firestar dipped his head and padded through, the rest of the Clans following him wearily.

Ashstar heard a couple of murmurs as the strangers filed past.

"Breezepelt, what if they're pretending to be Clans? What if they're rouges?"

"Heathertail, dear, don't worry! I don't think they are, honey!"

A big, golden tom glared at the black tom, Breezepelt, in disgust. Breezepelt sneered at him. "Mind your own tail, Lionblaze!" he hissed.

They all paused at the edge, moaning when they saw the water. "We're going to have to swim!" Blackstar groaned, pawing at it. RiverClan, though, gave cries of excitement and slipped into the water like fish, swam across, and clambered out on the opposite side.

Firestar turned, belwired, to the original three Clans.

"How do you get home? You're not wet, so you dont swim, but-"

Ashstar raised her tail. "Watch and learn, *ThunderClan*!!"

She turned to her cats, as Sundance did the same. In a flash of golden light Rootleap led his Clan into the trees and they disappeared.

Firestar's mouth dropped open. "You can do magic?"

"SilverClan, into formation!" Ashstar yowled. "Three, two, one!"

She and Sundance turned at the same time into the light, spinning,

spinning out of control.

She caught sight of Onestar, Blackstar, and Firestar's awed expressions before the light took hold of her and she focused on her destination.

Once she felt firm ground beneath her paws she yanked her tail away from Riverstorm, and they shook out their fur, and raced into the camp, for Ashstar had landed them right outside of it.

Ashstar rapidly explained what had happened to the cats that stayed home and rushed her Clan to bed after a hurried dinner, saying only "We have a full three days to make a decision, so we need sleep!"

Again, hope you enjoyed this chapter, please point out any spelling errors that I've made and I'l go back to fix them. Also, thank you to all my followers! I appreciate you!

Chapter 16 - the meeting

Riverstorm blinked his blue eyes open, yawned, and stretched out his muscles with a stretch. Excitement then surged through him like a rushing river.

Today was the day that he and Ashstar would go to meet the four strange Clans! He hoped that they got away from the Gathering Place safely.

Riverstorm got up, stretched, nuzzled his mate, who now slept in the warriors' den with him after their kits had become apprentices, and crept out. He worked off some of his anticipation by taking a walk into the forest. It was very peaceful. The birds were chirping, the sun was shining, although weakly, and the trees were rustling under the force of the wind. Dew lined the grass, and Riverstorm's paws quickly grew wet as he walked across the forest.

Riverstorm had walked all the way to the Cloud Oak. He unsheathed his claws and looked up. The top of the tree was swathed in clouds, for it was a very tall one. He made a flying leap into the first branch, wobbling slightly.

The muscular blue tom proceeded to keep climbing, pawstep, by pawstep, until he was so high that the ground looked a mile away. He wasn't at the top though - no warrior had ever climbed to the top of the Cloud Oak. Riverstorm looked out over the forest, his homeland, with a sense of security. Then the wind picked up, and the branch he was holding on to wobbled. Not taking any chances with being so high up, Riverstorm immediately padded closer to the trunk, and sat in a fork of the branches, just watching peacefully over his homeland.

The sun had risen fully when Riverstorm broke his gaze away. He turned to look down to the ground, and, with a deep breath, leaped.

He landed with a thud on the lower branch. Without hesitating he jumped down to the lower one, and kept going and going and going

until there were no more branches. At this he turned to the trunk and slid down it, landing on the ground at last.

Feeling relief at his paws being on the ground again, Riverstorm lifted his tail and head and trotted back to camp. On the way back, he caught a squirrel that was stuck trying to go into its burrow.

He deposited the prey on the pile and wandered around the camp. Soon, Pebbleshine and Whitestorm ducked out of the warriors den, disappeared briefly into the apprentices' den, and came out with Riverstorm's kits. The other apprentices and mentors followed shortly after.

Riverstorm nuzzled each of his kits' in turn.

"Have a great day, Smokepaw, Hollypaw," he purred.

Smokepaw nodded excitedly, while Hollypaw leaped across the clearing, ready to go as she always was.

He saw his mother, Amberleaf, come out of the nursery. What was she doing there? Was she expecting another litter of kits with Treestorm, his father?

Fox dung! Riverstorm then cursed. He was supposed to wake Ashstar! He hurried across the clearing and into the leaders' den. Riverstorm shook the grey tabby with his paw, and she rolled over, blinking her green-amber eyes open.

"Hey, Riverstorm," she greeted him, yawning.

Riverstorm dipped his head politely and backed out of the den. Standing on the ledge, he flexed his claws, still excited.

Soon Ashstar ducked out of her den and padded over to him.

"Ready to go, Riverstorm?" she asked, ruffling her fur against the cold air.

Riverstorm nodded. "I'm so excited for the meeting! What do you think, should we let them stay?"

The two cats started walking.

"I think we should do to them what we did to MarbleClan and GoldenClan, but they need to find a territory slightly away from us, because I don't trust them yet. They could be lying rouges for all we know!" the tabby replied, flicking her ears. "And why do the leaders all have 'star' at the end of their names? Is that just a coincidence or is it supposed to be like that?"

Riverstorm shrugged. "I don't know. We can add that to the list of questions we ask them."

They touched their tails and Ashstar flung them, spinning, into nothingness. Riverstorm closed his eyes and took calming breaths as silver light exploded around them. Finally it stilled and the two cats found themselves on the Gathering Island.

Rootleap was sitting there with Breezewing.

Before Ashstar could speak, he mewed, "I took the name Rootstar to match with yours and the rest of the new Clans,"

Sundance emerged into the clearing with Cloudwhisper in tow.

"I have taken the name Sunstar," she explained. "So we all match!"

The six cats sat down at the roots of the tree and waited. Finally, they saw Leopardstar with an unfamiliar tom swimming across the water.

Blackstar, Firestar and Onestar also swam across, not as gracefully as the RiverClan cats though. Three more cats followed them.

"Welcome to our Gathering Island," Rootstar began, and with a flick of his tail, lifted up a tree in a burst of green sparkles, then placed it back down.

Onestar just looked at him jealously.

Ashstar stood up. "SilverClan has decided." she announced.

"GoldenClan has decided."

"MarbleClan has also decided."

Firestar crouched, wary of the answer, his green eyes raking the leaders

"SilverClan wishes that the newcomers stay, but on a couple of conditions."

"MarbleClan wishes that the newcomers go away, we have enough Clans as is."

"GoldenClan wishes that you stay, but on a couple of conditions."

Leopardstar looked relieved. Firestar purred, his green eyes twinkling.

"Thank you!" Blackstar rumbled.

Sunstar looked at her fellow leaders, slightly angry. "We must agree on the conditions now," she mewed forcefully.

"You go to StarClan to get your powers!" Ashstar suggested.

"You stay away from our borders!"

The suggestions droned on and on. Finally, all seven Clans agreed, and Ashstar and Riverstorm agreed to take the foreign cats back to their camps by magic.

"It's going to feel a little wonky, but just make sure you don't let go," Ashstar explained as she made sure everyone's tail was touching.

Firestar nodded nervously and squeezed his eyes shut as Ashstar leaped into nothingness.

Once they arrived where Firestar had told them to go, Onestar collapsed onto the ground, his fur bristling. The leaders straightened up and nodded to Ashstar.

"Thank you," Leopardstar purred.

The eight cats trotted off towards where they had taken refuge for a couple of days.

Ashstar turned to Riverstorm.

"Great," she mewed. "Let's go home."

And once again, they both turned into the silver light and spun, spun endlessly. They landed in camp and trotted to their business, tails held high.

Chapter 17 - the last snow

A/N

Omg. I cannot believe this! Final chapter! And yes don't worry there will be a sequel, coming out shortly, which I will tell you about in the next chapter! So excited!

Stormheart padded out of the warriors den early in the morning. She had been told by her mate that she was going on the dawn patrol.

At the mouth of the den she halted. A thick white sheet of snow blanketed the camp, trees, and dens.

Stormheart felt giddy and she pounced into the fluffy snow. It was cold. Freezing cold. She shook it out of her fur, shivering, fluffed out her pelt, and crossed the clearing to the dawn patrol, her paws sinking deeply into the snow. Stormheart joined Hawkfeather, Skybright, and Treestorm and walked out.

The black she-cat found herself padding next to Treestorm, who seemed oddly excited.

"What's up?" she queried.

"Oh, didn't you hear?" he replied, waving his tail. "Amberleaf is expecting another litter of kits!"

Stormheart purred. "Great StarClan, that's amazing!" she purred. "Riverstorm and Lightningheart will have siblings!"

Hawkfeather dropped back to walk with them. "Leafshadow is expecting kits as well!" he purred. "Three moons to go!"

Treestorm nodded. "Two moons for mine!" he meowed.

Stormheart nodded earnestly. "That's really great!" she purred. "Now, let's go catch some prey for our hungry queens!"

Stormheart worked with Skybright to catch two mice, and the two toms managed to get a thrush.

"Great catches," Stormheart congratulated them.

They continued along the border until they reached the Twolegplace. Cats rarely went there, but patrols needed to check that there was no activity on their side of the fence. Once they got closer, they heard a loud conversation.

"...amazing, and then Misty turned and ran away! Poor thing!" one voice said.

"But Jasper, didn't you say she already had enough?"

"I did, Oreo, I did!"

The patrol crept closer, and Stormheart poked her head over the fence to see three cats lounging on the grass. One was a black and white tom, another was a fat ginger tom, which was speaking, and a pretty grey she-cat with brilliant blue eyes.

"Those wild-cats think they're so tough," Oreo snorted. "I bet we could prance around on the other side of the forest and they wouldn't notice!"

Stormheart bared her teeth in a growl, and Skybright stiffened beside her.

"Who do you think you are?" Treestorm hissed under his breath, creeping a little closer.

"Yeah!" Jasper agreed. "I bet they don't actually fight and hunt - those are probably just rumors!"

Hawkfeather tensed his muscles, about to leap, but Stormheart pushed him away. "Not yet!" she hissed quietly.

"Petal, do you want to come into the forest with us?" Oreo asked.

"We're going to go mess with those cats that live there!"

The grey she-cat stood up. "No! You guys are mouse-brains for even thinking that - who do you think you are?"

"Suit yourself," Jasper shrugged. He stood up and padded forwards the fence. "You comin', Oreo?"

"Yeah! Wouldn't miss it for nothin'!"

Stormheart waved her tail frantically. The patrol split into two sides and waited eagerly to pounce. The ginger tom, Jasper, heaved himself over the fence, his eyes narrowed in glee. Oreo sprang over it a moment later. Petal leaped up onto the fence and balanced there, her muzzle curled in disgust. "You'll get shredded!" she called.

"Yeah, whatever, princess!" Oreo called back haughtily.

"Treestorm!" Stormheart murmured to the tom. "Go talk to Petal. Ask her to join our Clan." Without another word she pushed him towards the fence and leaped at Oreo, while Hawkfeather and Skybright dealt with Jasper.

"So, we're soft cats who don't fight? Really?" Stormheart growled at Oreo, who cowered as she bit his foot.

Hawkfeather was beating Jasper back with strong blows to the head, finally Jasper gave up and Skybright pinned him.

"Never, in your life, talk about Clan cats this way!" she snarled. "*You're* the softie that doesn't know how to fight! Don't you dare step on our territory, ever again."

Jasper nodded, terrified, and streaked away once the she-cat released him.

"Hey, where's Treestorm?" Hawkfeather asked, licking his claws.

Stormheart sheathed her claws and licked her paw. "I sent him to ask the other kittypet to join our Clan."

Skybright stared at her. "What? Why would you do that?" the older warrior asked.

"Think about it, Skybright!" Stormheart mewed. "We need more warriors, remember? We lost six cats-"

So far, there were four snowfalls, each harder than the last. Many cats died of starvation: Fawnberry, Jackrabbit, Starlight, Rabbitclaw, Honeystripe, and Mousetail all went to join the Ranks Of StarClan. My family was quite lucky to have survived the violent winter.

"-and we need more! Petal is different from the other kittypets - she respects the Clans! And a few days ago I saw her hunt down a sparrow, it was in her yard."

Skybright considered this. "Okay, fine," she mewed reluctantly. "Let's wait for Treestorm and then go to Ashstar."

Treestorm came back a few minutes later with the grey kittypet.

Petal looked around a little nervously.

"Why did you bring me here?" she mewed.

"Would you like to join our Clan? SilverClan?" Stormheart asked, stepping out of the shadows.

Petal considered her words. "What does that mean?" she asked.

And Stormheart was off, describing how the Clans worked and how they interacted with one another. Petal nodded thoughtfully.

"I suppose," she murmured. "Being a house cat - I mean, kittypet, isn't too fun, I want to hunt, maybe even fight, and be free!"

Stormheart dipped her head. "Let's go, we're taking you to Ashstar - our leader."

The four of them proceeded back to camp, paws crunching in the snow, and the rest of the forest eerily silent. But Stormheart knew that new leaf couldn't be far off.

Petal had tried to take her collar off, but failed, and so Skybright and Hawkfeather both clawed through it and buried it at the roots of a nearby tree. Free of her collar, Petal bounded through the forest happily.

Hawkfeather called her back as he scented a thrush, and quickly caught it to show her.

Petal's eyes were round. "Wow!" she mewed, sniffing it interestedly.

In a few minutes they ducked into camp.

"Ashstar!" Treestorm yowled.

The lithe tabby ducked out of the warriors den. "What is it?"

"We found a kittypet that wants to join the Clan!" Stormheart summarized.

Ashstar stiffened. "And..." she asked cautiously.

Stormheart shrugged. "She can hunt, she respects the Clans, what more can you ask?"

Ashstat considered her words. "Very well, Stormheart. She will be given a moon to prove herself a worthy member of SilverClan, and after that, she will have an assessment to see if she is ready."

Stormheart flicked her ears excitedly. "Thank you, Ashstar!" she exclaimed, exchanging a look with Petal.

"You will be her mentor, Stormheart," Ashstar continued.

"M-me?" she stammered. "Oh my StarClan, thanks!"

Ashstar gave her a smile. "You're welcome."

Stormheart exchanged another gleeful look with Petal and led her out of camp.

"Where should I start..." Stormheart contemplated. "Oh, I know! Let's go find the other apprentices, Petal!"

Petal nodded, slightly nervous. "I'm ready," she mewed.

"Don't sound so serious! You'll do great, I know it," Stormheart purred.

The two she-cats padded out into the forest, Stormheart showing Petal how to sniff for prey - and cats.

"Open your mouth to taste the air - that's it! What do you smell?"

Petal sniffed, concentrated hard. "Mouse, I think.....also some cats- no, four cats passed by here not too long ago, right?"

Stormheart nodded vigorously. "Correct! But I think you missed these scents."

She led her over to another forest path.

"Two more cats!" Petal exclaimed after taking a sniff. "Who are they?"

Stormheart furrowed her brows at the former kittypet. "We also need to work on your scent recognition, it's not too hard. Different Clans have different scents, and you need to be able to smell an intruder, not all cats are friendly," she mewed, her tail tip twitching. "These two scents are Smokepaw and Pebbleshine, they are probably doing battle training, because the battle training hollow is that way." She pointed her tail to the right, where the two cats' trail led to.

"These four scents are Maplepaw, Riverstorm, Hollypaw, and Whitestorm."

Petal nodded thoughtfully. "Are they hunting?"

Stormheart nodded. "Correct!" she mewed. "And we're going to join them."

She marched off, following the scents, Petal hurrying along behind her.

They walked into the clearing to see Maplepaw creeping towards a

sparrow, Riverstorm watching her with an irritated expression on his face. Hollypaw and Whitestorm's gazes were following her as well.

Stormheart hushed Petal and they waited. Maplepaw leaped into the air, and to Riverstorm's surprise, landed on the sparrow. It gave an abrupt chirp that was cut off as Maplepaw bit down.

"Great job!" Riverstorm mewed.

Stormheart pushed Petal towards him.

"Hi, Riverstorm!" she mewed. "This is Petal. She was a kittypet that wanted to join the Clan, and Ashstar assigned me to be her mentor. Petal, this is Riverstorm, my mate."

Riverstorm stepped forward and inclined his head to Petal.

"Nice to meet you, Petal." he purred. "Congratulations, Stormheart, on your new position."

Stormheart nodded. "That's Maplepaw, that's Whitestorm, and that's one of my daughters, Hollypaw." she pointed to each cat as she said their name.

Petal shuffled her paws. "Hi, everyone," she mewed.

Hollypaw bounced up to Petal.

"Hi!" she purred. "Do you know how to hunt? Maybe we should hunt together!"

Petal looked slightly overwhelmed. "Well, I caught a bird once, and I guess we could try to hunt together,"

Hollypaw waved her tail. "Okay let's go!"

Stormheart held her back. "Not so fast. I still need to teach Petal the hunting crouch."

Stormheart sank into her crouch and waited as Petal tried to copy it. After a few minutes of struggle, Petal finally did it perfectly, and

leaped forward, soared gracefully through the air, and pinned a leaf.

"Okay, now I'm ready to hunt with you, Hollypaw!" Petal exclaimed.

Hollypaw crept forward silently, flicking her tail to signal at Petal.

Petal copied her, tail sweeping from side to side. Maplepaw followed them eagerly, her sparrow laying next to her mentor.

Stormheart sat down beside Riverstorm and Whitestorm. Together they watched their apprentices stalk into the brush for a hunt. A few minutes later, there was a high-pitched squeal, and a gray tail swished out of a bush. Stormheart half-rose, but then Petal ducked out from the brush, a squirrel clamped tightly in her jaws.

She lay it down at Stormhert's paws and announced: "I did it!"

Stormheart purred. "Great job, for your first day! We'd better get back to camp!"

That's it! I can't believe it's finally done! Make sure to comment and vote if you enjoyed!